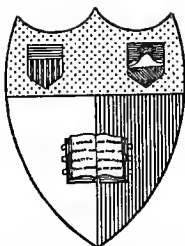


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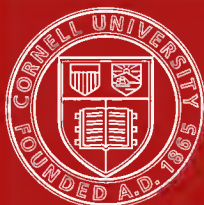
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THE SHAKESPEARIAD

*Souvenir of the Tercentenary
of Shakespeare's Death-day
April 23rd, 1916*

A DRAMATIC EPOS

BY
DENTON J. SNIDER

ST. LOUIS, MO.
SIGMA PUBLISHING CO.
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The Shakespeariad

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART FIRST—THE MAGIC ISLE.....	6
ACT FIRST—Return of Prospero.....	7
Sc. I. Caliban and Prospero.....	7
Sc. II. Hamlet, Caliban and Prospero..	25
Sc. III. Ariel's Soliloquy.....	36
Sc. IV. Ariel and Prospero.....	42
Sc. V. Horatio and Young Prospero...	63
 ACT SECOND—Women of the Magic Wood...	79
Sc. I. Rosalind and Pandora.....	79
Sc. II. Horatio and Hamlet.....	93
Sc. III. Horatio and Young Prospero...	110
Sc. IV. Rosalind and Pandora.....	116
Sc. V. Horatio and Hermione.....	130

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART SECOND—SHAKESPEAROPOLIS, THE CITY OF THE MAGIC ISLE.....	143
BOOK I. Induction	145
BOOK II. The Venetian Trilogy.....	205
Portia	212
Desdemona	265
Imogen	313
Epilogue	340
 PART THIRD—THE OVERWORLD OF THE MAGIC ISLE.....	 353
ACT FIRST—Hamlet's Palace.....	359
Sc. I. Horatio and Hamlet.....	359
Sc. II. Horatio and Visitors.....	367
Sc. III. Horatio and Young Prospero...	375
Sc. IV. Horatio and Studiosus.....	382
Sc. V. Redemption of the Ghost.....	394
Sc. VI. Transition	406
ACT SECOND—Prospero's Temple.....	409
Sc. I. Prospero and His Son.....	409
Sc. II. The Pageant of the Penitents...	421
Sc. III. Caliban	427
Sc. IV. Ariel's Repentance and Finale..	441

The Shakespeariad

Part First

THE MAGIC ISLE

ARGUMENT.

The plan is to present Shakespeare's entire work in the action of a poem, of which he is the hero performing a literary deed as yet the most significant in history. Hence the title *Shakespeareiad*, which seeks to unite the epic and dramatic forms into a higher kind.

The *Shakespeareiad* is located in the Magic Isle well known as the scene of the poet's "Tempest." The poem is composed of three main Parts, which form successive stages of an ascent from low to high. The First Part is the Magic Wood, or the forest of the Magic Isle, which is rimmed on the outside by the sea. The Second Part is the Magic City, which rises up in the center of the Isle and is called *Shakespeareopolis*, embracing all the poet's characters in its separate abodes. The Third Part is the Magic Overworld, whose name hints the poet's supernatural forms—ghosts and spirits.

The throng of visitors from all quarters of the globe appear especially in two representatives: Pandora from Hellas and the East, and young Prospero from Atlantis and the West.

ACT FIRST.

The leading characters of the Magic Isle are seen to be evolving into our time out of the poet's shapes, which are taken up where he left them. First, Caliban and Ariel, earliest creatures of this Isle, are unfolded into their modern parallels and along with them their master, old Prospero. Hamlet also is found roaming in this Magic Wood, sinking into a deeper gloom and despair, from which his friend Horatio seeks to rescue him.

Caliban, being left sole lord of the Isle, after the departure of all its other inhabitants, appears, talking to himself.

SCENE FIRST.

Caliban's Soliloquy.

Sad and solitary Caliban!
Left alone am I after living with men
In the daily intercourse of work and word!
Here telling my woes to the silent sunbeams
I see them laugh back at my tears,
As I wake the woods and tune the tongueless grots,
Sighing around this Magic Isle
Now all undwelt of any human shape
To which I would mine own upbuild
That I too be a man.

Wholly to myself I have been handed over
By my high teacher, Master Prospero,
When he quit this song-lapped island
Rocked in its cradle of sea-waves,
For his old home at Milan
After his banished stay of a dozen years.
He found me on this very spot a brute
Both in my body and spirit,
And straightway he helpful opened a school
To start me upward to my superior self
That lay benighted as yet within me.
But I was not alone in my lesson,
Another pupil beside me he took,
His own little daughter, Maid Miranda,
Who remaineth to-day my dream of Heaven,
Keeping her shrine in my soul where I worship,
To whose godhood of beauty I as my goal
Eternal do aspire.

But alas! the perfect look of woman
With its sacred seal of primal love,
I can see no more in my loneliness,
Nor contemplate my hoped-for humanity
In its appearance emblazed to mine eyes
Illuming the path on high of my ascent.
Such is the harsh stroke of my fate;
With the form of man I no longer commune,
I hold not converse through the spoken soul

With what is above me,
Nor passes before my straining eyesight
Any shape I may love.
Then I miss Ariel, the Island's musician
Tuning the breezes like strings of his viol
Till the whole sky would play as his orchestra;
Also he, the spirit ranger, would rove all over,
Girdling the globe in one flap of his wings
From ancient Cathay to latest Bermoothes,
And strewing the welkin with ghostly voices
Which would whisper the guilty soul
Its deed of wrong and tell the atonement,
As he once did mine.
Him have I never seen, though I would;
Such is my hope: to see him the spirit,
As he messages truth under his antics,
For oft have I heard him rustle around me,
And tee-hee in the breeze at my scare;
When least expected his presence,
He would hum a wee note overhead,
Or roar in mine ear dread fragments of thunder;
Then he would croon his mellifluous ditties
To the twangle of multiple instruments
Anchored to boom of the drum
Till the sky would seem to re-echo
The cosmical song of primal creation,
The world with harmonies sweet overflowing,
While the winds would murmur melodious treble

And the billowy sea would bellow the basso.
Him, Ariel, the spirit invisible,
I, the visible, hope yet to view
As he is in himself, face to face,
That I also may share in his potency
Which gives him unseen omnipresence;
And I would peer in his tongue's magic fountain
Which cadences every word of his voice,
And every wisp of his tattered talk
To a singing temple of musical measures
Which school me the orisons holy
Attuning my soul unto Heaven.

But ah! my absent master Prospero,
To whose rule I once turned rebel,
How gladly would I serve him again,
For service was the good architect
Building my world within and without!
Could I but learn of his lore anew
And with him con his big book of wisdom
Which I plucked from its watery grave,
Whose mystical symbols I gaze at unwitting,
And long for their lettered secrets!
My hate of his training has vanished,
I recall but his care for my weal
And the golden runes that he gave me,
I daily keep counting their wealth
In the treasure house of my Memory.

I wonder if he far away in his Milan
 Ever thinks of his Caliban,
 Who would also by him be loved.

Prospero (in the distance).

I have come back to the Magic Isle
 Of which I was king with one subject;
 Longer I might not dare keep away,
 For I needed myself to recover.
 Here is my cell familiar,
 And the foliage guarding its entrance;
 How tidy it has been kept in my absence!
 By whom, I wonder? When left to itself
 I thought that its doorway would be choked
 With this wild nature's rampant luxury.—

Yonder I spy whom I seek—Caliban!
 But he sees me not, and I shall keep hid
 Till I may closely scan his condition,
 Whether he have lapsed back to savagery,
 Or kept the worth brightening which he had won
 When I left him sole rule of himself
 Not three years now ago.
 Mark! his shape looks changed, stands upward
 more,
 And his face shows a furrowed reflection;
 Has the fellow gotten my Book
 Which I left drowned in the deep as I deemed,

Out of the reach of his brain still twilit?
 But hark! he words me his hidden thought
 Telling the tokens I taught him;
 He thinks himself alone with himself—
 Wonder on wonder! his speech has upgrown
 Shifting its throated gabble uncertain,
 Its vulpine snarl, its canine growl,
 Its simian click like the chatter of monkeys
 To a touch of human-mindedness;
 That tender tone I never once heard before
 Caress the air from his lips;
 If the meaning couched in his words
 Be one with his voice's music,
 He can school me his schoolmaster.

Caliban.

To this listening breeze, ye Powers,
 Let me breathe my deepest confession:
 I lisp ye what has made holy my heart
 And leaved high into hope the tree of my life,
 Aye what still keeps shaping me upwards—
 'Tis in me the love of woman.
 Here I for the first time beheld her,
 Prospero's daughter,
 With the prime push of passion;
 But through her was broken the fetter of nature
 In which begotten I was of father unknown
 But of beldame Sycorax mothered.

Then slowly love loosed my bound aspiration,
 Me upbearing to be more worthy
 Of love in itself purely throbbed from itself,
 Which asks no reward but itself.

Prospero (aside).

I marvel the miracle—Caliban !
 Is it the monster I once taught to speak,
 And to call by name the twin lights of the sky—
 The sun lit over day and the moon lit over night,
 And to word each thing of his senses,
 Schooling him human along with my child,
 Lifting him upward ever to me,
 Till one day down he fell hellward
 Daring the nameless deed ?
 Yet I must not forget—he repented
 As I bade him farewell—
 Repented in his last syllables spoken,
 Which have haunted me ever since,
 And will not away from mine ear—and my heart.
 Fated Caliban, love he must by nature,
 Yet must do without love in return ;
 No woman can ever embrace his shape
 Entangled still with the beast,
 Or kiss that face of him still prehuman ;
 But all the more he must love though he wrestle
 Gainst the obstacle unsurmountable,
 And he still loving in love's defeat

Must be resigned forever.
That has me transformed to compassion
Melting wroth memory's vengeance:
I too have repented.

Caliban.

Once in desire's first urge of fury
Would I possess the woman beautiful
Who had stirred primal creation within me;
I would seize in frenzy the world's jewel
As mine own for my heart's recompense
Outside of the law which outlawed me.
But now I seek no longer requital,
I resign the hope for possession,
I renounce the woman beloved:
But love I shall love in itself
As its own prize and final fulfilment,
Winning the guerdon supreme from failure.
Gross it may start far down in nature,
But still self-refining runs love's deep stream,
And all-sufficient unto itself
Till it mount up to its well-head divine,
Whereof Prospero once would teach me
In many a passage of scriptured lore.
But I yet could not understand
Till I had loved, yea loved and lost,
And then loved all the more and deeper
Because I had lost.

Surmounting the backstroke of fate,
Yet with many resurgences downward,
I rose to my trial's vision supernal
That God is love.

Prospero (aside).

Mightiest miracle of the Magic Isle!
Teaching me Deity's very self
As I never knew it before.
He has touched last depths of experience
Which my life never has sounded.
Can this be Caliban, once my slave and his own
Now risen to be Master Prospero too,
Yea overmastering me in life's lesson,
Just me, his sometime schoolmaster!

Caliban.

Here is his ancient ivy-wreathed cell
Which I keep trim for his return
And return he must—
To be all what he may be unto completion.
Long since when I was sole monarch and savage,
He arrived in my kingdom primeval
With little Miranda whom the first I saw
Of her sex and felt her sole service,
Then adored as a Goddess whom I must own—
I, the waxing adolescent of nature
Littered of the sow-bat Sycorax,

Interlinking the two extremes of women
 Below and above, the hag and the princess
 In the heart of my being—
 I sank to the demon ere I might rise.

(Prospero appears.)

Ha! there he stands again at his door—
 It is Prospero old in his study-gown,
 As I often saw him and cursed him,
 When his slave, but in mine own slavery;
 Now I would him beseech as a God,
 Who hath appeared in response to my prayer.
 Have I not been imploring for his return?—
 Say, art thou a specter of mine own making?
 O Prospero, speak me a word
 Undeceive me if deceived—
 Unghost thyself though a ghost.

Prospero.

I live what thou seest I am, once thy master,
 With the graying years tinted on these locks;
 I have come back to the Magic Isle
 Where I a dozen suns held sovereignty
 In the practice of my potent art.
 Now again I have quit old Milan, not banished
 But willing, aye yearning;
 I could no longer breathe in its prose
 Grown stranger to the dead world of seeming;

I sighed for my Ariel's presence once more,
 My free Genius I would, winging viewless
 Through all spaces and times and climes,
 And bonding the earth with his roundelay.
 O Ariel, I invoke thee hither again
 To meet me out of the far Bermoothes,
 Thy new elemental home by the West,
 And to sing me what thou art doing
 In thy newest musical measures.
 Say, Caliban, knowest thou of his presence?

Caliban.

I have not heard him here hymning for years,
 Not since you once shipped away on the sea,
 And left me free in this magic solitude
 To struggle alone with myself.
 See him I could not if I would,
 He is a spirit not of my kin or ken:
 May I yet behold him in his right realm,
 And love him as my dearest companion
 With his world of spirits made visible!

Prospero.

Mark my confession, O Caliban!
 For thee too I have longed by the hour,
 Longed for thy look in my absence,
 Yea even wished again to behold thy shape!

Soon I found I needed thee also,
For thou hadst ingrown a part of me,
Not to be easily cut from my heart.
I schooled thee indeed as thy teacher,
But my training of thee turned out
Thy training of me as well
In a mutual salvation of soul.
Now I have come to recover my Book
Which I rashly flung to the waves—
My magical Book with its printed symbols,
Source of my power over future, present, and past:
And my broken staff I would mend
To win mine own recovery,
Sceptering my sovereign sway of the spirit.

Caliban.

Yes, I remember that Book of thy greatness
With its leaves of mystical letters,
Marching black lines across the white page,
Bearing high oracles hidden of wisdom,
Which were sealed to the search of my sight;
But their secret I was intent to fathom,
Deeming it some message of welfare to me;
Slowly I learned somewhat of the letters
Without thy cognizance.
Wouldst thou see thy Book once more?
Enter.

Prospero.

Fain I am to look into my ancient cell,
 Long the scene of my art and my spirit's home;
 How well-kept it has been, quite as I left it!
 Oh the surprise of Heaven! Here lies my Book
 Which I sought to sink far under the sea
 Beneath the deepest reach of sailor's plummet;
 And here my magic staff stands whole as it was
 Ere I broke it in twain to unmake it forever.

Caliban.

I watched thy actions strange from my hiding,
 And thwarted them both for my sake and thine,
 Since I forefelt thy work unfulfilled,
 And that thou yet wouldst return
 To make thyself whole—
 Winning thy full self-integration.

Prospero.

The magician thou hast become of this Isle,
 O Caliban counterworking my magic
 And saving it from its own doom,
 Aye saving me too from my deed.
 Tell me, what is thy wish?

Caliban.

I would see Miranda again.
 She it was who unknown to thee

Taught me to spell out and hold in mind
The elusive signs which look from thy script
Unsealing to me the fountain of knowledge,
Thou knowest the rest.
Is she here with thee?

Prospero.

Thou sawest her quit her father's cell long since
To be Ferdinand's wife, queen of Naples.
I marked thee watch her departure hence
As her ship sped away from the shore
With her new-won lover of royal estate;
I saw thee wade far out in the shelving sea
To catch the last glimpse of a loved look lost:
But why ask for her, the impossible?

Caliban.

I would see her again—not to woo her,
But to renounce me and thus to restore me
To a possession eternal;
Love mortally incorporate I would hallow
That mine I make it forever
And worship in faith its appearance divine,
As thou didst teach me aforetime
That God once came down incarnate
To be seen in His son as a man.

Prospero.

That lesson I gave thee, well I recall it
But I thought it lost ;
Now thou hast bettered my best instruction,
And applied it afresh beyond me.
Well do I know that my daughter Miranda
Pitied thee for thy hopeless passion
When it came home in might to herself
As she watched her Ferdinand piling old logs
Doing the same menial service as thine,
Laid on her lover in trial by me :
For I slaved him down to a Caliban,
And sternly forbade her loving him,
To test the truth of his heart—and of hers.
At first she scorned thee in haughty contempt
Then soon sympathy felt with thy love
In responsive rebound from her own ;
Though she could not requite it with herself,
She begged of my mercy thy pardon
And gave to thy heart her blessing.

Caliban.

Many thanks I owe to the words of the sage ;
Still not through thee and thy spoken lore
But through thy daughter's presence
The effluence high descended upon me
And lodged eternal in my bosom
As the God incarnate.

Prospero.

I note it well, thou strikest the keynote
Attuning all this Magic Isle
And its melodious city built by the Muses—
The keynote of love's supremacy.

Caliban.

I used to hear Ariel's strains only outside me
Streaming the air with rich concordance of sounds,
But now since his absence from sea and island
They come playing within me.

Prospero.

And thou too canst aspire for the Book
And its mystical script of my wisdom,
To make thine own the words of my Genius,
Perchance to win that Genius itself
As the uppermost crown of thy ascent.
But what wouldst thou with thy winning?

Caliban.

Not keep it as mine, but give it away
To mine unweeting folk of distant Argier,
As thou didst give it to me.

Prospero.

And thou couldst sin, how well I remember—
But couldst also repent of thy sin,

Thy deepest limit overreaching in grace,
Coercing thy hag-born nature's lot.

Caliban.

Another compelling experience was mine
Which to me was deepest; I could love,
And then fulfil the worth of my life
In love's resignation,
Keeping the sacred fire still burning
On my soul's innermost altar,
Supplanting my mother's old sag-bellied God,
Setebos the lust-bound.

Prospero.

Thou art indeed transfigured—thou hybrid!
Of the witch-mother conceived and whelped,
But of father not told!
And thy shape, once prone, uplifts more human
Through love's unwearied self-reconstruction
Architectonic of the soul's temple,
Aspiring to me and mine, O Heaven!
What if I and mine were once like him
In my far forbears!
And what if I and mine hereafter
Should by him be won in his ascent!

Caliban.

Hark! I hear somebody softly approaching,
I see a shadow hitherward flit

In a periphery trembling of sighs ;
 Yonder he steps earth-bent in look !
 I have seen him oft darting amid the trees,
 Solitary, soliloquizing, upbraiding
 His fate in the deepest agony of soul :
 Sympathetic I have to think him,
 He too has loved and lost and been lost,
 But methinks he cannot renounce—
 Oh the pain of his perdition !

Prospero.

Already I have noted his sombre costume,
 And heard his sepulchral voice echoing
 Through the spacious mansion of Hamlet,
 The largest structure of Shakespearopolis.
 See, 'tis Prince Hamlet himself.
 Let us step into this cove as he passes,
 The word weighs heavy on his lips and must drop
 By its own sheer gravitation,
 Sounding the stress of his heart :
 Hist ! we may hear his new soliloquy.

Caliban.

Still further downward he seems to be looking
 Into the Tophet of human despair ;
 Would I were able to turn his eyes upward
 That he march along with me to Hope !

SCENE SECOND.

Hamlet.

(Having wandered alone in his gloom from his urban home to the Magic Wood, he suddenly breaks out to himself:)

Mothered of such a woman!
Unfaithed she of the deepest pledge of her sex!
Broken before Heaven lies her marriage vow
To be true to my father.
But who, which is my father?
How can I know whence I am begotten
If mine own mother play false
Perchance even before her wedding day?
Mother, tenderest name on earth,
Turned to the nethermost curse of Hell,
Forsworn of the strongest oath of a woman,
Of perjury guilty to God!

Caliban (aside).

How sharp his words cut through to my heart,
Making its old wound bleed afresh
Whose burn I first felt years ago,
When I too came to know of my mother,
With whom you, Prospero, once reproached me
Blazing a fierce malediction upon me
For my birth which I could not forestall!

Was, then, Prince Hamlet littered like me
Of some Sycorax and paternity blank,
Hag-born and hag-bred, not in this savage Isle,
But in the lofty palace of Denmark's king?

Prospero (aside).

Not so tense in thy voice, he will hear thee;
I would hearken his further confession,
For his talk with himself now dives far down
To the darkest pit of his mystery.

Hamlet (alone).

Such destiny birth has laid upon me:
To know who is my mother whom I must damn,
Not to know who is my father whom I would love.
O mother, mother, it is thine to become
The very Satan of womanhood,
Worse still than the first mother Eve
Who was tempted of the Destroyer;
But thou art the very Destroyer's self,
To scourge thine own innocent race
Down to the depths of the soul's perdition.
Here is thy offspring—look at his fate—
Balancing on the edge of the dire abyss!
Such, then, am I, Hamlet the Prince:
Nature's earliest bond and the dearest
Venoms every throb of my human duration
From the first germ of my being.

My smile lighting upon the fondest face
Curdles to a demoniac scoff,
And the prime fount of affection wells forth
Through my days all poison.

Caliban (aside).

How he rips up my original pain!
He starts in me to aching once more
The first pang of my being born,
And whelms me backward to the black Tophet
Which I thought I had passed safely over
Fleeing away from my fatal despair,
Which was mine own mother.

Prospero (aside).

In me too he tingles an ancient sorrow,
For I had a false brother who dethroned me,
Like Hamlet's father, the doom-bidding ghost.
But my brother dared not me slay in the open,
Though covertly willing my death;
Nor did he debauch Miranda's mother,
Who was the angel still seen in her daughter;
Through his crime it befell that I landed
On this Magic Isle, now my true home,
And found thee here, as thou knowest—
But hearken again, for he seems afresh
To bolster himself for the utterance mighty
Of some new message writ on his heart.

Caliban (aside).

Oh the keen counterstroke wrenching my bosom!
Love is opening the deepest vortex of Hell,
Before me I peer down into its lowest abyss,
And see the source of all creation
Turn to creation's Destroyer.—He starts.

Hamlet (alone).

O Love, how I long for thee
With the urge of God's own potency!
But thou art corrupt at the source of being,
Tainted for me in my mother's womb,
So that I would go back and slay mine own birth.
How the night of the world closes over me,
And I breathe out my palsied voice slowly
Into the tomb of the last silence,
Whither now I am passing alone
In the funeral cortege of time!
Thus Fate's vampyre wings down over me
For the final extinction.—
Halt, moody demon of mine! I am Hamlet!
I must recover myself for my task;
This shape is but my suspicion dark
Which flits hither to tempt me to Erebus—
Melancholia, hell-bird, twin-born with my soul
Now unbeaks me and wings off behind me,
Allowing me one healing thought

Which I can tongue again to my heart
And get relief from the goblin
Tearing my soul to shreds.

Yet when I hear mine own native speech
And dare take a look at myself as I am,
The chasm gapes wide its jaws afresh,
And there yawns a deeper nethermost Hades
Which gulps me down in one black thought
That I am not my father's son
But the offspring—spare me ye Furies!
Of his very slayer, now my King
Whom destiny bids me slay in turn
To set right God's blasted justice,
By turning myself a murderer
Perchance my father's murderer.
O woman untrue to thy bond,
Where ends thy chain of interlinking curses,
Which here fetters thy guiltless child
Till he execrates love itself!
Can I ever clasp my Ophelia again,
Or hear her sweet confession of soul,
Without the pang in my heart
Whispering her sex's infidelity?

Caliban (aside).

Harshest trial of time! He can love no more
Unless he dares the sting of the adder

Which darts from woman's unfaith:
His lot is more murderous than is mine.

Prospero (aside).

Alas! he cannot renounce what fates him,
He cannot repent, undoing what undoes him,
Terrible doubt which gnaws him
That he is not King Hamlet's son,
But of some lower blood-fiend begotten
Even his next of kin.—Hark again!

Hamlet (alone).

I the doubt-benighted son may be fathered
Of this royal criminal,
His brother's murderer,
Now throned in my rightful place,
And oh! my eternal assassin
Daily clawing my soul to damnation,
To a death which will not let me die,
To a vengeance which dares not avenge.
See! there flits toward me again the dragon,
My dark bat-winged tormentor,
And me grips to plunge me in a spiral downward
Into the incestuous fount of my being.
O father Claudius, now king of Denmark
And thy brother's murderer,
Fate bids me, thy son, slay thee,
And then bids me slay myself in right requital,

Me, my father's own slaughterer
Wreaking a double retribution
For thy guilt and mine
With his weapon eagerly gleaming.

Caliban (aside).

Hold me not, mine own destiny calls me
To stay his daggered hand.

Prospero (aside).

Wait, good Caliban, to his rescue
Step not forth from our hiding rashly ;
He still has something to confess of himself,
Man's uttermost tragedy he voices,
I have never heard it before in all my days
Not even in Shakespearopolis,
Where bides many a fate-shent spirit.
See ! he lives despite his drawn weapon,
His bloodiest words are his salvation ;
If thou stop the outpour of his heart in speech,
He may turn his knife's point to that full heart
And let his world-pain trickle out
In the flow of his life-blood.

Caliban (aside).

See him brandish his glittering stabs
As he stares on some terrible vacancy !

There! he whips the edge selfward,
 He will undo himself, let me forth,
 Unhand me, unmouth me.

Prospero (aside).

Stay thyself in silence,
 Watch how he drops his blade slowly and sheathes
 it;

Good! he is ready to turn a new thought
 Which stops his deed to new delay;
 I have seen him act that way before
 In the Hamlet Mansion many-chambered
 Of spacious Shakespearopolis.

Hamlet (alone).

Dare I still be this Hamlet and not refuse
 To live longer such life, knowing me mortal?
 For I never again can love woman,
 Nor man, the sad heir of her body,
 By the Creator's fiat unjust
 Whelming the race through birth into Fate.
 To me humanity's source gurgles but death,
 Through woman I am doubly accursed,
 So is the world, overshadowed with gloom,
 Within me droops the sickening glow
 Of the last sunset of the universe,
 And my woman-born Fury, Melancholy,
 Starts to flap hideously over me
 Her God-undoing night-wings,

As I go and come like a ghost in my thought
That I, young Hamlet, knowing my mother
Am not the son of the right king Hamlet,
But of his fraternal destroyer,
Now possessed of his scepter and wife.
O Hell open thy jaws this moment
And swallow me down to thy center;
In thee I shall find my last relief
If I can but crisp up in thy flames,
Burning out of me this fatal fire
Of my first creation.
Soothe me, good Inferno, with thy torments,
Which will mitigate or end these pains
Of the son of Claudius the fratricide,
King of my Denmark, husband of my mother,
Usurper not alone of my right to my realm,
But of my right to my father.
Rather the son of Cain be I called
And acclaimed by the whole world
To-day's heir of his primordial curse,
Which descends from man's first blood guilt;
No, I wrong old Cain of Adam's stock,
He never debauched Abel's wife
Ere he murdered his brother;
My blazon of descent is mine own alone,
And stands solitary in the world's heraldry.
Let me run and hide myself in the grave
From this damnation of sonship.

Prospero (aside).

Suspire not so deeply, he will hear thee,
My Caliban sympathetic;
Why so excited? Mark his new calm.

Caliban (aside).

I can scarce bear up under the slash
Which cuts me through from his daggered speech;
He has gashed my faith in woman's love
Which was my rise toward Godhood,
And master-builder within my soul
Of my life's new structure.
O my heart! he has stabbed my ideal Miranda.

Prospero (aside).

Well, he is scurrying off in the bush;
Let us repose, we need to catch breath
After living through this furious furnace
Of fellow-feeling afire
With such a mixture of Hell and Heaven.
Some deeper releaser he needs
Who will undo the curse of the woman.

Caliban.

Though his words infect me with his disease,
Still I would help him be healed
That I too may be whole—
I swim away in a drowse.

Prospero (to himself).

He dozes off dreamward, he sinks to deep sleep
After such trial and triumph!
The all-prophetic Caliban,
He the thwarted lump of nature's malice!
What a testful experience has proved him
In his fleet up and down of life's ladder!
First I found him mounting up Godward through
 love,
But now with his soul's last sympathy
He has seen Hamlet sink down to Satan through
 love—
Love, the angel and devil of man's first being,
Aye the demiurge hidden of Shakespearopolis.

But behold a new appearance,
Caliban's other personality,
His counterpart of the spirit
Whom he cannot now see—but shall,
For I must impart him my vision.
Hark! the soft tira-lira of Ariel's song
Tingles mine ear out the distance,
To the breeze's accompaniment borne
He is coming, but I for a while must be hid
Till I hear from his voice his condition,
Whether fallen aback or advanced
Equaling Caliban.

SCENE THIRD.

(Through the Magic Wood suddenly flits Ariel, having returned from his flight to liberty.)

Ariel (to himself).

Hail to my ancient home, the Magic Isle,
To which I now come back
From my outing of nebulous freedom,
Where I lived without any rule
Far over Hesperian sea-waves,
On the world's other side from Prospero's realm!
How glad to return to service I fleet,
To my master's service of happiest years,
That I may win my new liberty
And be redeemed once more.
He it was whose lordship saved me
From the malice of barbarous Sycorax—
She the lover of pain in itself,
The monstrous hybrid of woman,
The mingled demon of swine and bird,
The hater of spirits like me,
But the mother dread of king Caliban
Now the sole monarch as heir.
Once she was queen of this island
And pegged me fast in her torturing prison
For a dozen years of Hell,

Till Prospero came and freed me from her,
But made me unwilling his slave,
Performing his service of spirit
Around all lands and seas, in storm and in sheen,
Wreathing his thought in the folds of my music
As I carried it over into the deed.

Still I longed for my liberty,
And oft begged him to let me loose to myself,
For I would be the free spirit alone,
Unbound of duty or any relation,
Living within mine own self's world
Of microcosmic caprices.
At last the master bated my labor,
And let me off whither I listed,
To live my absolute selfness
In freedom's serenity taskless.
But enough I have wandered about
Trying that elemental liberty
Which I found in distant Bermoothes,
Floating isles of the unrulable sea
Bumping each other around the anchorless main,
In the license unbridled of nature.
Stanch ships touching there would perish,
Pounded by furious waves on the rocks;
Their wrecks would be flung against one another,
Till they be scattered or sunk out of sight
In the turmoil mad of the elements,

While the struggling sailors might swim a moment,
Then faint to a watery death.
Meantime the spirits dwelling Bermoothes
Would dance in a frolic over the hulls
With the mockery grisly of demons,
Howling their paeon of liberty lawless,
Outscorning the hurricane.

But another and deeper longing draws me
To come back for a share of the Magic Isle:
I would again witness love,
Like that of Miranda the maiden,
When she first beheld young Ferdinand;
Both I once brought together just here
And watched the bud, the bloom and the fruitage
Born of the bliss of two lovers,
Which till then I never had gazed on.
But that sight became a part of my soul;
Though I be a spirit unsexed, bodiless,
Without feeling, pure vision ideal,
Not humanly qualified
But only a blob, an airy thought;
Still I, Ariel, transcendent of sense,
Can know of love though I have it not,
And through my intelligence I may share
The sympathy glowed of man's first passion,
And long for its presence within me,

Love intellectual knowing of love,
I the spectator only, never the doer,
The vision but not the deed.

O Miranda, thy look I would once more witness,
The look of the woman in truth ;
Before thee I had seen only one of thy sex,
The monstrous female Sycorax torturing
Even my airy form by her witch-work,
From whose shape I would shy off my eyeballs
Throbbing a pain of my spirit's vision.
Yet with Caliban's pang, though he be her son,
I trace an intimate fellowship now ;
He could love, but oh ! I could not,
Though I would to the last beat of my brain ;
There he heightens above me,
There he is of essence superior,
Even if once I thwarted his passion
By irate Prospero's order.
Yet I long to meet him again in friendship,
And mark just what he has done with himself
In response to the deep last drive of his nature.

But dare I whisper my aspiration
Which chiefly has pulled me back to the Isle ?
I would not merely look at love,
But also rise to possess it myself
And thus to be real—

Not simply with fleeting eyesight outside,
But with my soul inside
I would learn to participate
In passion's glowing humanity,
Even if me the immortal it turn mortal;
Anyhow I have to make me deathless myself,
Winning eternity's guerdon as mine.
This is the lesson I would now learn
In the new school of Master Prospero
That he would somehow take off the limit
Of my vast inexperience,
Imparting to me the power to love
Whereof I being ignorant deem myself doomed.
I would possess it acting within me,
Not simply belook it outside
In vain unattained aspiration.

How I envied Ferdinand, Princee though he were,
Not for his kingdom, but for his gift of love
Which shot up at sight with a gush
From his first fountain of being,
Aye, of his very mortality born.
Think, I even could grudge hoggish Caliban
For the most human push of his heart
Which urged him to seize love bodily,
Though I waylaid his deed of fulfilment.
But the counterstroke of mine own heart
I felt smiting me vainly within,

I the bodiless, sexless, loveless spirit
Ariel, I live under a curse,
Love-banned in my being.
Dear Prospero, list to my prayer:
Incarnate me, oh humanize me,
Yea materialize me that I may love,
That I may even sin and repent of my sin,
And thus become manlike, that I rise godlike.
I would even descend to the bottom,
And take Caliban's shape, though a beast,
That I mount through love to be human,
As God once came down and abased Himself
To man's mortal estate,
Thus proving his right divinity.
O Prospero, Master, appear to me now,
And pray to thy God to bless me with manhood,
And grant me anew his creation!

SCENE FOURTH.

(Prospero and Ariel coming together, have a dialogue at the old cell in the Magic Wood about their experiences since their separation.)

Prospero.

Mine Ariel, well have I heard thy new prayer
Within my prescience, yet too without me
As it comes wafted over the Midland Sea
Floating the air of this Magic Isle,
To which thou hast bravely returned
From the distant Ocean beyond.
And I too have come back to this cell
From my magnificent Milan.

Ariel.

O my Master, Redeemer, Prospero,
I never did know what was good for myself
When I, a spirit, was a worker for thee
Obedient to thy harmonious world,
Yet unhappy amid all its order,
Longing for freedom untasked
Which I have found but new slavery.

Prospero.

Let out the wish of thy heart, old Moody!
Still discontented despite all thy freedom!
Has much leisure become thy burden of life?

Ariel.

Thou liberator, also my law-giving lord,
Twice hast thou freed me the trammelled:
First from the torturing tree of witch Sycorax,
Then from thine own easy servitude
Thou didst speed one day my luckless departure;
Now I come asking a new liberation
Manumitted to be from my last manumission
That I may get back to duty again.

Prospero.

What, Ariel! my spirit familiar
Whom I dismissed to thy liberty,
Art thou here once more to be slave?

Ariel.

Yea, and in search of thee, my right master;
I cannot live all alone, just for myself,
Even if free to do and undo as I may,
Service I must be, else I am but a void,
I learned it from thee, I trow unawares;
Now I would act thy bidding again
Flitting unseen roundabout this Isle
Or over the watery boundlessness,
Circling in flight the ever-orbed earth-ball,
Even riding on swift beams of light
Through the all-engulfing' Cosmos,
Till I may float in Orion's bright star-dust,

Or flap my pinions in nebulous fire-mist
Which lamps the fields of the empyrean,
Watching the suns that are going and coming
In the cycle of aeons.
Still under thy law I would stay
E'en in my fantasy's farthest flights,
For I know it now mine
By the test of liberty lawless.

Prospero.

But where hast thou been, my Ariel,
During these years of thy freedom's discipline,
Since I turned thee willingly over
To the mad sport of the elements?
Much, I note already, has happened thee,
I too am not wholly the same.

Ariel.

Ah me! let me sigh out responsive
In sweet relief of my upbursting memory!
Experience great and new has been mine
Fertilizing my soul with its riches of years;
I am the aspiration for freedom—
Freedom the boundless bound-burster,
Still I find stations of freedom.
Unwearied I chafed at nature's restraints,
And rattled against the bonds of the law;
So I felt under Sycorax ruling me,

And blasphemed her old God Setebos,
 When she pegged me into her torment
 Till thou didst arrive and release me,
 Whereupon thy slave I became in turn
 Doing all thy fleet errands of spirit
 To the farthest stretch of imagination,
 Obeying thy world-creating Genius
 In its fabling flight even up to the Gods
 Whom thou wouldst invoke to the work of thy
 word;
 Still I was never content in my task
 But kept ever aspiring my freedom.

Prospero.

How well I remember thy protests
 Praying me: Is not this the last chore?
 But I compelled thee unwilling
 To suffer my sway autocratic
 More than a dozen of rounding seasons—
 Thee in thy service ever the more unwilling,
 Till thy last duty done one minute
 I bade thee be off to the elements.

Ariel.

That last duty I now look back at through tears,
 Ideal tears of pure spirit's repentance,
 Even if then I bounded in joyance.
 Thee I did guide and thy reconciled people

Merrily over curled billows auspicious,
Sailing homeward to Naples in safety—
Saw thee land with the bride and the bridegroom
Who thrilled me one heart-stroke of beautiful love
As they quit my guidance forever,
And thou saidst me sadly: “farewell,
Ariel faithful, my spirit, farewell,”
When I shot away westward to freedom,
Which I dreamed to dwell on floating isles
Torn away from the earth’s fixed center
And tossing adrift on the tides of old Ocean.

Prospero.

Yes, I remember our parting of spirits
Which severed into two worlds far apart
Our twin-like selves of one life hitherto,
That I never dared hope to see thee again
In this Magic Isle which itself seems a spirit
Whose sweet embraces I often have longed for.
Well! here I am come and so art thou—
But read me a leaf of thy history since.

Ariel.

Recall when once on a time thou didst send me
To the still-vexed Bermoothes, storm-haunted isles,
Far beyond the Pillars of Hercules
Where opens the throat of our Midland Sea
Toward the setting sun of the Ocean:

Thither I daringly followed thy summons
 That I should fetch thee a wonderful dew-drop
 For some practice hid in thine art.
 There I found a new world of free spirits
 Dallying over the thousand islands,
 Each going the round of his own sweet will
 Unrestrained of rule and of law,
 And loosed from every convention and custom,
 While all were building of life what they would.
 There each of the anchorless isled Bermoothes
 Floated around in fantastical foolery,
 Even when they were clashing in earnest
 Attuned in a dance to the wind and the wave;
 Yet often would dash them together an earth-
 quake,
 Or burst them asunder a fiery volcano
 Old Chaos revealing as God of Bermoothes
 And over their freedom enthroned.
 As I perched on a low shifting sand bank,
 Hoar Chaos, the Titan, rose up befoamed
 From the sea-splash and thus he addressed me:
 “Here lies thy heart’s satisfaction at last:
 Beings of freedom, millions on millions
 Dwell undutied, separate each on his islet,
 Not bonded by law of social existence;
 Here is thy liberty, its original home,
 I am its maker, the earthquake upheaving,
 Come and take what by nature is thine.”

So spake the God and tumbled an island over
As he sank underneath the spume of the waves.
I fulfilled thee my task, O Prospero, master,
Fetchings thy magical dew-drop,
But the word of the deity steeped all my soul
And turned me its image awake and adream,
Though still in thy labor I slaved.
Hence it befell that so often I prayed thee
For my release unto freedom.

Prospero.

That is the mystery then of thy prayers
Which kept extorting my promise afresh
To deliver thee to thine own mastery.
But say us the secret of this thy return,
For it tells more than thy first departure
And attunes the soul more deeply to concord.

Ariel.

I soon had spirited enough for my schooling
Mid those free spirits of lawless Bermoothes,
Without commonwealth or polity stable,
Where all was a clash of individuals;
The islands themselves kept thumping each other
Under the ceaseless scourge of the sea-waves,
And the clangorous noises were worst of all
For me the maker of musical strains
To which I was tuned in the Magic Isle.

So I longed again for Prospero's rule,
 And the ordered life with its law
 Where I would find my freedom in service,
 And hark to the melodies thrilled overhead
 To measures of harmony spherul
 Wafting my soul out of discords infernal.

Prospero.

List! again the soft swells of sky-music!
 I hear the same orchestra air-stringed,
 But it strikes a new symphony sounding
 Many melodious turns of old strains.

Ariel.

But tell, O master, why art thou here
 Paralleling strangely my deed of return,
 So that the broken music of the Magic Isle
 Seems to be once more choiring tunefully whole.

Prospero.

I too felt the need of this higher world
 With its dominion of spirits;
 And my Book, my all-encompassing Book
 Which I flung in the sea from this rock
 I would recover as now my salvation.
 Caliban's instinct saw it and saved it
 On the watery surface swimming self-buoyed—
 For it refused to stay sunken in darkness

Though a plummet I chained to its clasp—
Caliban found it afloat and hooked it out,
Then guarded it thoughtfully in my cell,
Even seeking to win its hid treasures
From the mystical script of its symbols,
Hoping for my return to this Isle
In his love's swelling bosom still shaggy.

Ariel.

Caliban, once my foe—I feel him my friend—
Did he rescue the precious Book of thine art?
Why, that's what I wish to make mine—

Prospero.

And the magical wand of my mastership
I shivered, burying deep the pieces,
Thinking to close my career forever;
But Caliban watched me out of his bosky den,
When I was gone he dug up the fragments
And waxed them together to wholeness.
Here it is now in my hand as goodly as ever,
I can wield it over thee, still compelling,
And yonder lies my Book.

Ariel.

I see it all and wonder the more,
For oft I heard thee vow to be quit of thine art;
But how couldst thou do without thy life's task

And live the round of a zero incarnate?
 Yet enough! another theme is mine more pressing:
 Tell me a word of thy daughter Miranda;
 Love I first witnessed appearing through her,
 Not me it beshone, but her royal lover.

Prospero.

Happily married I left the young pair
 As rulers of a fair kingdom together,
 While I singly was throned in my Milan;
 But I never again could be happy
 In that troubled realm of man's conflict,
 I longed for my island of banishment
 To feel its sweet silent communion
 With the Upper World which only my Book
 Would charm down into my presence.

Ariel.

Therein we were feeling in common—
 I hungered to serve my magician again,
 Of my ruleless freedom I tired,
 Indeed it would have undone me
 Unless I had fled from that Tophet anarchic.

Prospero.

And I quit maundering over my grave
 Whose deedless swoon once obsessed me
 With its hope and its fear, aye with its faith;

I ceased dreaming my immortality,
But began making it daily mine own
Through living my conquest of death.
Though old I would ply my magic again,
And intercourse hold with my spirits afresh,
Reading still in my Book, even writing it over
That it proclaim the new work of the Gods.
My wand too I longed for remade,
With its charm evoking images gorgeous
To be framed in my pictures of speech
For the gallery grand of Shakespearopolis.

Ariel.

Happy am I to report for that service
Which has now become my true freedom;
I shall plague thee no more for release,
My labor is turned to my prayer,
Aspiration uprises unto fulfilment,
Outlawed no longer is law,
My liberty shuns the illegal,
I have left the isles of anarchy loveless,
The self-pulverizing Bermoothes,
And returned to my harmony's home—
Hark! that music sounds from above,
As when I timed the sweet throb of my tunes
For my melody's chorus,
Echoing on the soft roll of the air-waves above.

Chorus of Spirits.

We are longing still to be free
But also to serve.

Prospero.

That is now the refrain of this Isle,
Chimed to one chord thy return is and mine,
Which rounds the whole welkin concordant.
But, my dear Ariel, dearer than ever,
I would send thee on a new journey,
Away from thy last Pandemonium
Through which thou art with suffering passed
In the deep discipline testing of freedom,
Which thou hast nobly borne to the winning.
Mark! man's two greatest of goods,
Freedom and aye sweet Love
Can turn his destroyers or saviors.

Ariel.

Well do I know the terrible trial
Wherein I battled to be my whole worth,
Returning to thee in the Magic Isle
From that elemental republic
With its devil-built mill of grinding atoms.

Prospero.

Thy salient word bespeaks me my cue:
Hast thou heard of a land beyond Bermoothes,

Beyond that manifold Hell-on-Earth?
Thitherward lies the continent youngest
Containing the promised land of the prophets,
Atlantis throned in the sheen of the West,
Dreamed of in name by the old Greek sages,
The new Olympus of the new Gods,
On whose shore was landed some time ago
The boat of our Genovese neighbor
Titled Columbo the Christ-bearer—
Thither I would dispatch thee at once
On a swift errand of weight.

Ariel.

Good Prospero, thou makest me happy again!
That journey has long been my uttermost goal;
Often I peered from my perch of Bermoothes
Along that continent strown in the distance
Lying in peace on the ocean's bosom;
How my spirit-wings wistful would flap to fly
Over the heaving hungry surges between,
Which seemed to grow calm as they neared that
shore
Fabled with bounties of ancient Hesperides.

Prospero.

Why went thou not speeding thither at once
To girdle the globe with thy magical wings
Fleet as the flight of the sunbeams
When first shot from the eye of God Phœbus?

Ariel.

Only through thee might I work that miracle,
And the hest of thine art's far prophecy;
Though daily my outlook sighed westward,
Thou alone couldst grant me that power beyond
me;

So I have come, obeying thy call once more.

Prospero.

I too have returned to the Magic Isle
That I may summon thee out of the vast,
By my Book now restored and restoring
Me lost for a time to mine own fulfilment.
But hearken now my secret of secrets
Which hitherto I have hidden untongued:
Only Miranda thou knowest as mine,
As my one only child and my solacer sole;
But I have also a son now matured
Whose mother in giving him life lost hers;
As he grew up to youth, I trained him
To be my throne's timely successor,
Myself wishing to flee from my dukedom
Into the realm of my library's lore.
But there rose the tide of the world's discovery,
All Italy swelled with daring emprise
To burst its Mediterranean bounds
In which our spirits had long been immured,
And to sail the Ocean across to Atlantis

Following mariner Christopher's track
To a liberty new of space and of soul.
My son was filled with the stress of the time
And groaned to be rid of his heritage ducal;
He was you, my Ariel, when wedged in the pine,
He begged for release from the pain of his life,
As if he were corked in a bottle
Like the sad spirit that sighed in the story:
"Make me free! Make me free!"
One day I missed him—he had slipped out to sea.

Ariel.

That pang of the free spirit fettered—
How well do I know it to be my demon,
Who has plagued me at every turn of my lot;
Sycorax curst, the Magic Isle, Bermoothes,
Have been but stages past of my long enslavement,
Even if bettering ever the better
In my perfectible rise,
Till now I come back to thee for redemption.
How can I serve thee?

Prospero.

But first to the pith of my story:
That son of mine, young Prospero call him,
Wishes to cross back hither the Ocean,
So I read in his missives lettered,

To behold once more his father on earth,
From whom he ran off in his boyhood.
He would also see Italy beautiful
With her art's high treasures new and antique;
Then he would look on the face of his sister
Whom e'en as a babe he never beheld,
For he had broken and cast his old-world's shell
Ere her mother had throbb'd her to light.
But he will not stay on this side of the globe
Where the moulds of the spirit are fixed too hard,
Nor will he make any claim to Milan's throne,
Asserting his right of descent;
For he plumes himself an Atlantid
Enduring no duke, king, or emperor,
No primogeniture hoar, no privilege mossy,
No Europe, which he nicknames Bermoothes
With its ever-clashing tribes, cities, nations,
And damns it as History's Pandemonium,
Exampl'ing to old papa young freedom
With its nose-wise twist of green self-importance.

Ariel.

Truthful painters I praise ye both,
Each holds up to the other his picture,
That each may take a good look at the other;
But to help out your son, bid me my service.

Prospero.

But my prevision I can foretell
That his ship has shot the strait mouth of our sea,
And rounded the rock of grim Gibraltar
Cutting the spume past befogged Balears.
Ariel, wing thee at once to his vessel,
Deflect his course from Milan hitherward,
To this Magic Isle which he knows not of,
Which he must view in all its mystery
And learn somewhat of its wonderful city,
Meditating her people and palaces.

Ariel.

Thy task is mine to perform to the letter!
How dear thy son in my thought looks already,
Recalling thy daughter's loveliness.
Allow me one word's prayer before I set out:
Fain would I greet the monster, Caliban,
And put mine own worth to its pivotal test,
Which is my hope to unmonster him yet.

Prospero.

In that too you have trilled the tune of my heart,
I longed for him also at Milan;
As he needed me for his uplift,
So I needed him to fulfill me in turn;
His absence I felt as my soul's own chasm,

That farewell repentance of his, as he spake it,
Has haunted me ever since with its prayer
Voicing the rise prophetic of man.

Ariel.

Still another memory of him I own,
Which for me puts Caliban over me quite;
This it is: he could love—
Love at heart's deepest the beautiful woman,
And wish her to be his possession forever,
Even if gross was the thrust of his passion
When he first knew beauty as maiden incarnate.
But I did not love, could not—Oh the curse
Which lies on my limit of being
As the spirit's counterpart to him, Caliban!
Call him a creature of sense unbridled,
A brute, a monster thwart of nature,
Still he loved and he longed and would win,
Ready to battle for his ideal good,
Even to offer his life to his heart;
Hence he could be redeemed from below,
Refined in the furnace of white-hot passion,
Which was the burning penalty cleansing him,
If he accepted in faith his purgation,
Which I would witness in him for my sake too,
As that is the uppermost work of this Isle,
Its mission's evangel remedial.

Prospero.

But good Ariel, my errand is waiting.

Ariel.

Prospero, merciful, grant me a word yet.
Mine is only the aspiration of love—
Unbodied, unsexed, I am but a thought,
A dried-up show, infertile e'en of myself;
Meseems the universe loves and so creates;
How I long to be whole and able to love!
Oh master, humanize me if thou canst,
Me, Nature's forced celibate partial,
Integral make me through love;
I cannot repent of sin like Caliban;
How can I transgress and be a right man
Without a body to render me human?
Incarnate me to be a sinner
That I may win my way up to God.

Prospero.

Thou askest for something not in my power
But it may be in thine, though I say not.
Still unhappy spirit—unsatisfiable!
Once thou wouldst freedom alone,
I gave it thee twice by mine art—
Twice—one over the other in betterment;
Now thou wouldst possess love, not mine

But woman's, as if thou wert already a man.
 Thou king of spirits discontented—what next!
 Enough of this riddle! Tarry no longer,
 Hasten away to my son's driving ship
 And turn its wake hither. Be off,
 Else he will arrive before thou hast started,
 Perchance he is come already—away.

Ariel.

O master, I would not stay long from thy presence,
 For still I am of thee to be dowered
 With my soul's task supreme,
 Unto the goal of mine own best fulfilment.
 Behold the proud scowl of these citadelled walls,
 I cannot mount them without thy lead
 To the seat of thy uppermost temple
 Perched on the topmost peak of Shakespearopolis.
 And grant me, I pray, my new vocation,
 For freedom no longer I ask, but for service
 Which calls me forth to my worthiest being;
 When I have brought back the news from thy
 son,
 Proclaim me my duty's evangel.

Prospero.

Yes, I forgot, thou art right;
 Our city's high-towered enclosure thou seest,
 Which has many entrances lower and loftier;

Fly back to it bringing thy message,
Circle it round till me thou beholdest
Where I stand at mine own guarded portal
High over all other entrances,
Even above the clouds in pure sunshine;
There thou wilt find me awaiting
With my Book and my staff recovered,
And myself also restored.
There I shall consecrate thee anew
To an Olympian office like that of the God
Conductor of souls to the invisible world
That they commune with its people.
And by a new title of honor thou shalt be installed
The Psychagogue of Shakespearopolis.

SCENE FIFTH.

(Horatio having followed Hamlet from the city to the Magic Wood in order to keep distant watch over him, and also to find a band of actors, meets young Prospero who has just arrived from Atlantis.)

Horatio (alone).

More misanthropic, more melancholy
 Than ever before is my friend Prince Hamlet
 Roaming alone through these silent dells,
 In whose solitude puts he a tongue
 Which tells of his own desolation.
 He, the associate of my student days,
 When we studied together Philosophy
 At the new University, Wittenberg,
 Where we both partook of the time's deep protest
 Declaring the rule of conscience uprisen,
 Which whelmed him to brooding so inwardly.
 Often he creeps down this shadowy glen
 In gloomily mooded monologue,
 Thinking blame on himself and his forbears
 As if in revenge for existence.
 I have come to this ripple-kissed sea-coast
 Which zones with its babble the Magic Isle,
 Hastening from the royal Danish palace
 In search of a band of seafaring actors

Reported sailing all the way hither from England
To play in our city of Shakespearopolis,
Which is one great playhouse all of itself
Full of plays which keep playing forever.
But Prince Melancholy needs a new drama
Mirroring to him his malady's rage,
And then the healing way to his health,
Undoing his tragedy's deed.
The theater seems his only doctor
Prescribing the one pleasant medicine,
Which he will fitfully take
For the solace of woe if not for its cure.
The fantasied life of the stage's people
Feigns the world unreal which he loves to live in
With the whole limitless freedom of thought.
He shuns the age's cruel reality
(Which he arraigns as his murderer;
The king, the court, all Denmark, his very mother
He impeaches as the high criminals
Who have unjointed the time's machinery;
The lady fair of his heart he loathes yet loves,
All womanhood he would send along with her
To the nunnery universal,
And thus work the unmaking of man
To make him sinless.

But that which roils his soul's last venom
Is she who bore him, Queen Gertrude,

For he keeps burrowing blind as a mole
 Fatally into his hidden origin—
 Of his mothering certain
 Of his fathering doubtful—
 Which flings him a prey to gloomy surmise,
 Then drives him forward to throes of revenge,
 Yet holds him back in the grip of his conscience.
 Thus balancing on his philosophical teter
 He turns from doing his pivotal deed
 Ever omitting, never committing,
 In his own puzzle of life he gets caught,
 Mid whose mazes entangled he is the fated,
 From which my new call is to free him.
 Ah me! it is mine to write the new play
 Which has him to redeem from himself,
 Unfolding his soul out the crush of his lot
 By the way of a deeper atonement,
 For he already has bidden my friendship
 Tell his story aright to the future,
 Salving the wound of his name and character
 Which bleed gashed from his birth and circum-
 stance,
 Till he somehow be made again whole
 In new reconciliation with Order supernal.
 That is my burden and also the man's,
 Yea, the spirit's last task in this age,
 To solve the problem of Hamlet—
 Unravel the tangled knot of his destiny,

Aye, to unfate the very stroke of his fate
By a fresh intervention of Heaven.
Once he had the players enact to the Court
In presence of him and me and the royal pair,
The fratricide's *Murder of Gonzaga*,
To catch the conscience of the king
For which I too was lying in wait:
And he caught it right in the deed,
I saw the confession acted myself,
Far stronger it was than if worded.
But that play suits no longer his spirit's weal,
It would madden him more in his memory
Starting the backstroke of vengeance now stilled.
Some other turn of the drama has to be schemed
To message the harmony inner of life,
Imaging here the mediation of man
When rent in twain by his nemesis own,
Till he change to new hope unhating his hate,
Rebuilding his life from the ruins of death.
What personality dare I invoke to his rescue?
As his heart's deep disaster centers in woman
Who has been faithless just at her holiest test,
So it may turn that the true woman-soul,
Made pure in the hottest fire of her sex's trial,
Can guide him along the path of his healing
To his haven's happy recovery.
Such a character now I must find
That I turn her remedial fountain

Into the poisoned life of the Prince
Through her deed set forth in vividest image
By the art histrionic.

But who may be coming yonder?
A lone man is stealthily slipping this way,
A presence new in this Magic Isle
Whose denizens all I know well;
A young fellow of knightly adventure
He seemeth a pilgrim from a far country.

Young Prospero.

Good stranger, give me to know where I am,
This island perplexes my sight and my spirit;
My ship lies moored out there in the sea
And I have rowed to the shore alone,
The sailors would not quit solid deck
In terror of some menacing signs,
Nor would help me oar my wave-tossed boat
To this still shore seeming unpeopled;
They said it was famed a ghost-haunted isle
Floating unanchored around the globe
Through circumnavigation of spirits.

Horatio.

The fable hath in it a gold-grain of truth;
And something like that I heard of Bermoothes.
But tell us the rest of your miracle,
If you feel in the mythical mood.

Young Prospero.

They heard a weird music embosom the Isle,
Throbbing upward like an Artesian fount
And overflowing the sea's mad discord,
Attuning the lands far away to its wave-beat,
Even circling the earth with melodies tender
To the keynote of love.
An organ piped of many-toned instruments
Would overswell the hoarse roar of the waves,
Chording them into a cosmical cadence
Like the song of primal creation.
But voices too would rise intermingled,
Oft wording the furious cry of the storm,
Or shrilling the shout of the frenzied tornado,
Then trembling to sighs breathed up from sweet
 heart-throbs
Which ravish the ear with their ecstacy.
But that which paled each face to death's fright,
And made all see in the watery troughs
Their ready-made graves dug by the tireless surges,
Was the groan of deepest human agony
Loading with sorrow the winds of the tempest,
Or turning the jovial breeze to a wafture of pain
Which told of the surcease of heroes
Undone of the time's very heartbreak,
Crushed by the weight of a tragical world.
So the seaman would list to sounds of the Isle,
Multitudinous, mighty, mysterious,

As they wound serpentine through one another,
From the curse of the Titan defiant,
To the low sweet lisp of the lover's first thrill.
Thence is it that mariners will not approach
Within three miles of this shore.
But tell me the name of this piece of the globe?

Horatio.

The miracle of the Earth's isles thou hast reached,
And tasted of some of its wonders;
By us it is called from Lord Prospero,
The mighty magician of Milan;
But why dost thou shake at the name
As if tingling a thrill of strange memory?

Young Prospero.

That name is mine and my father's as well,
Him have I voyaged to visit at home
From afar overseas on the earth's other side.
I have been absent from this half of our planet
Since the long stretch of years from my boyhood;
But now I am come by hap to your presence,
Sailing out of the sunset hither.

Horatio.

I never have heard of Prospero's son,
But his daughter I knew, the gracious Miranda;
Still in your look I note turns of his face-lines,

And that subtle trick of your eye-stroke is his;
Otherwise you impress me with difference,
Hardly you seem of our order of life,
Yet not unrelated to us.

Young Prospero.

Yes, I hail from that new hemispherical half
To this old one the counterpart younger
In space and in spirit as well as in time;
To find my forbears I fly sail-winged,
Whom I must know that I grow fully myself.

Horatio.

You make big eyes as if seeing me spectral,
Your bewildered gaze says more than your words;
I confess me a denizen not unnamed
Of this Magic Isle of Lord Prospero,
Which is the seat of a city of phantoms
Of whom perchance I seem to be one.
But you, who may be you, I can not quite tell,
Real of blood and bones or an aerial shape,
Of so much matter or of so much spirit,
A cotter squatted in this unpeopled forest,
Or a far cosmopolite hither strayed
Having heard of the wonderful Isle.
A singular sort of man you step up
Among all I ever have seen in these parts,

Unlike the folk of Shakespearopolis,
Even if thine own father dwells there
In his classical temple topping the welkin.

Young Prospero.

I hither come seeking my self ancestral
Over the reflux tides Oceanic,
From my far-off home of the future,
The hitherto dream-sought Atlantis.

Horatio.

Me thinks you suddenly change before me!
More human your look turns, yet mightier,
As if the new man of the planet stood there
Unfolding into his race's heritage,
Pushing old fantasy into reality.
See! another shift of his soul's panorama,
Which widens itself to be too the world's!
An eye-stroke which prostrates the uncut wilder-
ness,
Making civil its savagery,
Daring to ship the unroadable Ocean,
Doing the deed direct from Nature's own heart,
Yet searching the spirit's last discipline—
Bespeak me again—who, whence, what?

Young Prospero.

You rhapsodize me back to a dream,
Whose tale may be telling hereafter.

But first describe me yon city I see
 With palaces climbing a hill to the top,
 Till with the welkin they meet and mingle
 Upheaving their height from the island's heart?

Horatio.

Your father's mansion there gleams from the sum-
 mit,
 Not so large as many another,
 But of the most exquisite structure,
 Architectonic of thought's deepest reach,
 Perfect the outside shape as the inside spirit,
 Of such fascination the love in its look
 That many behold its seemingness only,
 And leave unseen what it holdeth.
 I go to contemplate often its treasures,
 Communing lone with its sacred mysteries
 As a templed shrine where spirits whisper,
 Making that height the Holy of Holies
 Of our city's poetic architecture.

Young Prospero.

High heaves my heart-beat to know my parent
 again,
 And to see his dwelling of beauty you speak of,
 Even if I be not one of its inmates.
 It overlooks a whole city you say,

All of which is surveyed from its top—
Intone me the roll of its name once more,
Tongueing its musical modulation.

Horatio.

A city built of the sheen eternal,
Illumed by the light that never sets—
Shakespearopolis.

Young Prospero.

O friend, now breathe me a yes to my whisper
Which I suspire from the last depths of my heart :
Does Claribel live there, once Princess of Naples?

Horatio.

What! the daughter of bad king Alonso
Who helped to supplant good Prospero
When he, sent adrift on a leaking boat,
Floated over the sea to this Magic Isle
With his little Miranda?

Young Prospero.

You speak of events I know nothing of,
Which must have happened since my departure.
But where then is my idol, my Claribel?
Let me confess her image has ever been mine
Since I saw her a maid of fourteen
Once at the royal palace of Naples

Though her father was our House's enemy;
In my youthful flight I bore her loved face
To the far Occident over the Ocean,
And have kept it still beaming through all of my
 days.

Now I am come to this world to behold her,
Aye to win her and take her away
To my new home in distant Atlantis.

Horatio.

Love again and again, and nothing but love
In this haunted Isle and its city of spirits;
But I may tell you the tale I have heard:
Your Claribel fair has been long since married
To the rich African king of Tunis,
And, as I ween, a Mahommedan too.

Young Prospero.

What! she to a blackamoor bonded in wedlock!
And perchance to an infidel also!
O Fate, that is not the road to Atlantis.
But does never she visit this Magic Isle,
That she be seen with its other high women?

Horatio.

I barely have heard her musical name,
Which fondles the ear with its liquid cadence;

Here she hath no abode of herself.
But when you are come to Prospero's palace
Your father can tell you her history.

Young Prospero.

Ah me! that seemeth a long while to wait—
Can you not thither conduct me at once?

Horatio.

Nay—I have a business heavily pressing
Which turns me off from all toying with love,
At least just now in the pinch of my problem:
It is to rescue Hamlet my friend
Through some new way of closing his soul's cleft,
Some fresh sanitation cleansing his world-pain
It is my deepest vocation to find and to bring,
Else I in turn shall lose of my best.

Young Prospero.

The sorrow of Hamlet has swung round the globe,
I have heard it oft in Atlantis
As the true tale of the soul's own tragedy.
But what is the source of the man's disaster,
And the possible means of his rescue?

Horatio.

Two women have whelmed him into this sorrow,
His untrue mother and his betrothed unhelping;

Now I must find some female saint or Madonna
 To medicine ills of her fatal sisters,
 Who have brought him to twinge in despair
 On the edge of a plunge to Hades trembling;
 If woman damns him, woman must save him,
 Else what becomes of her in the order supernal,
 Helpless she to undo her own ills?
 If Eve be the mortal temptress of Adam,
 She must his rescuer be from his doom,
 Else both are accursed forever—woman and man.

Young Prospero.

But is there some woman known of your city
 Who can perform the great mediatorial act
 Which heals the rent spirit unto salvation?
 Who is she, tell me her name?

Horatio.

I confess I have not found her as yet;
 A hundred females of varied virtues
 May be seen tripping the ways of our city,
 Some souled of God's own merciful breath,
 But others most bloodily blotted in guilt;
 The dozen best women of Shakespearopolis
 I know and of them I must pick just the one
 Who is the best of the best
 To be the lost Hamlet's inner restorer,
 Since I have none myself of mine own,

Being womanless so far of life,
Nor has he, for poor Ophelia is not weaponed
To fend off his Fury, black Melancholia;
She rather evokes it the more
Just by her innocence will-less.

Young Prospero.

Let me stay at your side to see and to know
That wealful and woeful worldful of women
Thronging the halls of your Shakespearopolis.

Horatio.

Thither I yet am not ready to pass;
In this circle of woods which belts round the sea-
shore
I still have to wait for my players
Who hither have shipped from Albion distant.

Young Prospero.

I would saunter with you among these trees,
Perchance I may meet as a wood-nymph disguised
Fair Claribel straying hither from Tunis,
A wanderer like myself from afar,
Seeking relief for her sigh-laden heart.

Horatio.

Impossible! she has at home her royal husband
Who is like to be guarding her now in his harem
Over the sea at his Moslem capital.

Young Prospero.

Fatal word! it stabs my hope to the center!
But away! let us stroll through this glen;
My fortune may bring me another fair shape
To supplant the image forbidden,
For love in failure moves still to its goal.

ACT SECOND.

The action is still located in the Magic Wood, but passes to the opposite side of the Isle looking toward the Orient, as the preceding act was turned toward the Occident. Moreover, the present act introduces women as the leading personages, whereas only male folk were to be found in the previous act. Several varieties of female character are introduced, culminating in Hermione.

SCENE FIRST.

(Rosalind stands on the shore of the Magic Isle gazing at a ship approaching from the East. She speaks:)

Rosalind.

The sail-swayed ship is rocking hitherward
And swims out of the sunrise over the waves;
On deck a woman clad in folds of white
As if she were a Goddess from the world
Olympian come down in antique shape,
Stands spying out upon our Magic Isle.
Who can she be? And why her voyage bold
From far away out of the Sungod's realm?

She drives to land, is now approaching me :
Hail, stranger, for such you seem in place and time ;
Draw closer to our hospitality.

Pandora.

Thanks for your gracious welcome to this shore
Which bends a swimming arc of greenery.
But tell me first, what city is that yonder
Slanting above the island's leafy zone
Till it seems domed with Heaven's canopy?
How changed from massive Orient's edifice!
Nor is it my temple which once Hellas built.

Rosalind.

That city lofty which you ask about
Looking such eagerness to know its name,
Is not put down upon our mundane map
Nor syllabled to mortal ear as yet,
But has its chart in universal mind
Of which it is the palace beautiful :
The name of it is Shakespearopolis,
And I live there forever young in love
Defying all the spite of centuries.
So comes it that I am to-day sent forth
To give the tender help of my career
To wanderers who seek the winding ways
Within its mazy-bowered labyrinth.

Pandora.

Indeed! The goal I have now touched which lay
Far down unweeting in my soul of hope
To find the love-built city of the Muses.

Rosalind.

But tell me, who are you? A woman, aye!
Methinks the key-note of your voice is tuned
Deeper and more compelling than mine own;
Your form is mightier, more Goddess-like,
A stranger to this island world of ours
Your garb of flowing folds in white declares;
That presence so reposeful in its station
Is only known to us as of the past;
Your marble glance of godful majesty
I would adore, e'en though I wonder now
If it could ever break to glittering smiles
Which stream across the face in hot response
Unto the hidden hammering of the heart
Concordant with the wafture of the strain
Echoing subtly through this love-tuned wood;
For here my sisters of this spirit isle
Breathe forth their soulful sighs in word-rich
measures.

To such sweet company of woman's love
I shall present you if it be your will.
Permit me then your name.

Pandora.

My people call me in my land Pandora,
The young Pandora, fabling me in time
Still young and staying young three thousand
years—

My land is first that greets the rising sun
And sets the sheen to music of its speech
In many a song still singing round the world
Beneath the car of high hot Helios.
I trail the beacon of the Western star
Over the trembling frolic of wide waters
That gently heave unto the ogling moon
Across the bosom of the Midland Sea.
All-gifted Hellas named me from itself
The woman of its soul all-gifted too;
But long I have me chafed against its bounds
Aspiring to this greater newer world;
So come I racing with the Sungod's colts,
To anchor on this Magic Isle betimes
Until I dare the larger stride of fate,
And make a dash beyond the confine far
Hidden in gray of aged Oceanus.
Just wait till you become as old as I,
And see if you do still remain as young,
A woman timeless of the poet's mold,
Rejuvenant with every age's turn.

Rosalind.

Pandora, thou the woman of all gifts!
 Seeking the other half of this round globe,
 Resolved to be thyself no hemisphere
 But all this earth, time past and future too,
 Relate me, what has brought thee now to us?

Pandora.

My quest makes for the great artificer
 Who in his workshop's living gallery
 Has oft enshrined in shape the woman's soul
 Out of her depths of last experience,
 Till all the world plays lover of her love:
 Now tell in turn somewhat about thyself
 For thine own face, methinks, glints love's appeal.

Rosalind.

They greet me everywhere as Rosalind
 In yonder city of my happy home;
 There live I with mine own Orlando won
 After adventures odd with sweet romance
 Within this wood of lonely lovers lorn,
 To which they flee from hapless hindrances.
 But yesterday good father Shakespeare came
 Dropping down on me as he will betimes,
 And thrilled a word persuasive in my heart:
 "My Rosalind, of my best genius childed,

A pretty task I have for thee to-day
 Which thy perfections only can perform:
 Go to the dale which rounds our Magic Isle
 With its green girth of hiding foliage,
 Whither I send my hapless lovers oft
 To win their sickened heart's recovery,
 Send too my sinners there for penitence
 That they be healed of their transgression's curse;
 Thy forest famed of Arden thou mayst deem it
 Where once thou didst assay love's luckless lot,
 Then triumph over all its counterblasts
 And turn the woods so full of sighing swains
 Into the happy heaven of fulfilment.
 Of all my hundred daughters here about me
 Thou art my choice for grace and fantasy
 To be the guide and herald of my world."

So spake he, and thou seest me here at hand
 To welcome thee unto our island's treasures,
 And start thee with mine own evangel first.

Pandora.

Rosalind, I have known of you before,
 I as a girl have tracked your devious path
 As you dared leave your land of ruler's wrong
 And plunge into the outlaw's lone demesne,
 Traversing woody wild and humble hut
 Responsive to your heart's own deepest throb.
 I wish for you as harmonizer deft

Of all the stressful struggles of my lot
Which had prescribed to me my future's limit
Against whose tyranny I felt revolt.
But now I have grown older, the first sap
Which trickles from the adolescent heart
Is not yet dead, but makes a new demand.
Show me your city built of poesy.

Rosalind.

Come higher up, ascend this knolled perch
From which a loftier outlook scans the height;
Now tell me of the semblances you see.

Pandora.

Fair edifices shoot above the trees
Whose carpet green of interwoven tops
Mine eye skips over to the welkin's dome,
From which the architecture seems to drop
Down on the summit of a sylvan glen,
As if to link the upper world and lower,
Conjoining in one work the Earth and Heaven.
Methinks I watch the sport of playful clouds
Which love to dramatize their fleeting shapes
Upon an airy stage of festal blue
For the lone looker's entertainment rare.
I have been going toward it the whole day,
And yesterday, aye still the day before;

That lofty mirage of the sheen-crowned city
 Kept darting in the distance just so far—
 I cannot near it though I hurry toward it,
 I turn a nook or creep behind a crag
 It will not hide nor will it quit my path,
 Its presence I cannot escape nor win;
 If once I reach a little perch and look,
 Straightway it throws itself above me there,
 And yet aloof—flees cloudward off again
 If I but take one step too near its pride,
 Which lets me not approach its haughty height.
 I wonder if the specter be mine own
 Playing me merry tricks of fantasy?
 But look! yonder again it shifts itself
 Outside me there! perchance inside me too!
 Ghost-led e'en if I be, I must find out
 The maker of this phantom, its meaning too,
 Though spun of imagery's fine gossamers.

Rosalind.

Such are the golden treasures of your sight
 Which still you have to seize and mint your own.
 But listen now! to hear brings something deeper,
 Transcending all that you can see outside;
 Commingled voices of the sexes twain
 You may discern in singing overflow;
 The woman's not so loud or massed of tone
 As is the man's deep bass when hit by fate,

But inwardly more tense and penetrant
 She strikes the notes of her whole destiny,
 Running the gamut of her breaking heart
 Keyed up to sweep the round of her soul's thrills,
 The joy, the pain, and the recovery.

Pandora.

I hear it beating in the distance tender,
 And I respond symphonious to its measures,
 As if they played the pulses of my heart.
 For through them I must pass as through myself,
 Suffering with them all as mine own too,
 Taking to me the soul-pain of this world.
 Pandora, I the all-dowered woman come,
 An ancient tale has oracled my task
 The epitome to be of all my sex,
 And to take up into my inner world
 The microcosm of total womanhood;
 And now I seeing have to live as mine
 And to impart perchance to other climes
 The spirit feminine of Shakespearopolis.

Rosalind.

Victorious maiden over obstacles,
 I, Rosalind must seek and win the man
 Who is my halved nature's counterpart,
 To make me whole of female moiety.
 World-known is the pursuit of my Orlando

Through sigh-strewn woods and rhyming trees of
 love,

As I would have just the one only man
For whom I too was born the one alone
Able to integrate the rift of sex,
The cleavage primal of humanity,
Turning dame Nature's deepest dissonance
Into the spirit's highest harmony;
So bonded two hearts live in one liberty,
Which here upon our earth may rise to be
The service mutual of Paradise.

Pandora.

Your word has pierced the point of life itself
In its descent from hoary time till now,
Touching the germ genetic of man's rise.
Let me be frank: Pandora shall not be
The filthy sewer of an offspring cursed,
Without the soul's impress in love's last act;
Such is the deepest test which I demand
As of myself, so of all womanhood:
To be the guardian of the sacred vase
Securing man's first right of worthy birth,
To sentinel the race's origin,
And not to let unlove beget itself
Perpetuating hell in human blood.
I shall select the other to my sex

Who comes and shows the seal upon his heart
Which makes complete us twain in symmetry,
So that we live of love the super-life
Above the dual frame of nature's mold.

Rosalind.

Dear Father Shakespeare will uplift you there,
His many daughters yonder you will meet,
Acclaiming woman's primacy in love,
Waging its conflict unto victory
Despite each testful grievous obstacle,
Though some will sink and perish in the fight.
Their heart's sweet pageantry we soon shall watch
Parading tender hopes and teary sighs
Through halls of mansioned Shakespearopolis,
Where dwell immortal in their words and deeds
The ideal heroines of womanhood.

Pandora.

Of love's high stewardship I am aware,
'Tis given in the instinct of my sex
To make me one with the Creation's act,
Rebearing still in love the universe
To nature's keenest passion concentrate.
Of that chaste urge of all-begetting power
Whose sanctuary I well know myself to be,
I dedicate myself the Vestal vowed.

Rosalind.

Here turns thy hardest struggle with thyself:
Canst thou be true to God's inheritance,
Or harken to the nighted underself
Where luring lurks the siren of soul
Thrilling the moment's mortal dalliance?—
But wait! I see two men approach in stealth,
As if they would keep hid from being seen
By one whom they will see and overhear;
Let us conceal ourselves and list in turn.

Pandora.

Are they not present dwellers of your Isle?
Or do they come from far away like me?

Rosalind.

The one I know and have him often seen
With Hamlet in the Danish Residence;
He is the Prince's friend full fellowed
In art and war and in philosophy,
A soldier, scholar and a gentleman,
But not a lover is he known to be
And so he trains not in my following;
Horatio is his sole untitled name,
Whenever he appears at home, abroad,
The Prince cannot be very far away.

Pandora.

But tell me who may be that younger man
Who steps so self-possessed beside his mate?
He seems to have a way unlike this folk,
A difference stamped deep in character;
An eye of conscious mastery is his,
Who is he, who?

Rosalind.

I know him not, I never saw him here
In any coign of Shakespearopolis.

Pandora.

I have not seen his like in these your lands,
Or in mine own of larger Orient.
A freedom looks he which I too would win,
And grain it deep within my consciousness,
For I am weary of this older world
With its transmitted law and outworn lore,
Of which I am but one more repetition,
Whose limits I shall cleave to liberty.
I long to break the chain of history,
And start another universe all mine
Beyond the pale of gray authority,
But mark that sovereign youth again—who, who?

Rosalind.

Both hide near by, their whispers we can catch
If we but crouch inside this leafy nook.
I like to play a hidden tit-for-tat
In overhearing those who overhear,
Thus turning back on them their artifice
And snaring smart disguise in its disguise.

Pandora.

And I would hear that youth say his heart's prayer.

SCENE SECOND.

(Hamlet again appears in the Magic Wood soliloquizing, now overheard by Horatio and the young Prospero, while all three are overheard by Rosalind and Pandora from their hiding place.)

Horatio.

Let us await him here behind this bush,
That I may catch his self's own talk again,
For I with all my mind's philosophy
Have never sounded yet the darkest depth
Where bottoms his last mystery.
Along this path he often saunters alone,
In solitary meditation on his lot
Ever upturning layers fresh of doubt.
This is the spot where he perchance will stop,
And, with a prelude of foretelling sighs
Let gush his heart to words soliloquizing.
He likes to hear himself talk to himself,
As if he were an actor playing his own fate
Before himself as audience,
He the theatre whole both speaker and listener.
He is a stage unborn in his own soul,
On which he plays his several characters;
But deepest down beneath all acted seeming
Lies hid fermenting the one true Hamlet

Unspoken yet, perchance unspeakable ;
Him to hearken is now my search attent,
Even if it turn out vain.

Young Prospero.

You say his trouble has its source in women,
The guilty mother is she who tears his heart,
And his lady-love has failed him too.

Horatio.

Yes so it is ; woman's frailty is his curse,
But his cure in turn must come of woman's worth
Undoing what she has undone
That he be whole again.

Young Prospero.

You propose to me all evil's conundrum ;
Think you to find such a balsamic woman-soul
Within this wood, this city, or this world ?

Horatio.

The female healer of his shattered spirit
Is the one hope I seek for everywhere,
To unfate his fate and heal his broken love.
Such a virtue I have beheld in body
And heard its tale rehearsed once on a time,
By a woman of Shakespearopolis
Enacting her own devoted life

For a man's repentance and redemption,
That he be reconciled to her, himself, and God.
But say, what stirs you thus to suspire,
Why look ye in such eager wonderment?

Young Prospero.

Methinks I have within myself a strain
Of that same malady of faulted love,
And I need too a healing presence,
To fill a voided heart.
Canst thou me show the remedial woman?

Horatio.

And so you let me take a peep into your life
Made vacant by the loss of Claribel—
An easy disappointment for a lover;
And you are young, you still can wing high hope,
Her place, methinks, will not be hard to fill.

Pandora (aside).

That youth doth heave a pensive wooing breath
For some affection that has slid away
Into the world impossible;
He looks the future, though he seeks the past,
But here can never be his home for good,
He casts his eyes beyond and yet beyond;
Whither? I would know that, and to whom?
I have an inkling that I could medicine

His sighing soul of its sad destitution ;
 But say to me in truth, my heart-skilled guide
 Who is that Claribel whose name I hear
 Tingling through me a troublous twinge ?

Rosalind (aside).

Unknown to me is she even in name,
 No dweller of this island I should think her ;
 So wait the time till you may discover
 The throbbing secret from the youth himself
 Who also is to me a stranger.
 But the older man who toward him bends intent
 I know to be the closest friend to Hamlet
 The Danish Prince who acts so strangely of late.
 But look—did I not see a sable-suited figure
 Dodging through the foliage just this way ?
 Ah here he is, the Prince himself, I vow !
 He stands, thinking himself alone—he speaks.

Hamlet (to himself).

A new suspicion has come to gnaw me,
 Snapping bits of pain from my very soul :
 Whence the difference in look, mind, character
 Between the two brothers,
 My father, Hamlet, and my uncle Claudius,
 Reputed begotten of the same parents,
 But as opposites humanly born and gifted
 Beyond all consanguinity !

The doubt sprung of my mother faithless
Subtly eats back into her mother's name
With its corroding poison
And infects for me all womanhood.
Two sons so diverse in the germ of their being
Aye even in shape so contrary,
Seem nature's impossibility—
As polarized as Ferdinand to Caliban,
When once they both appeared on this Magic Isle
Before the eyes of Miranda the beautiful,
Whom all three I have seen on the stage
Of Prospero's radiant Grecian temple
Far-smiling from our city's Acropolis.
Now my curse begins to spread backward
To venom a deeper maternity,
My ancestral mother involving
In the sweep of my birth's damnation,
And making my blood upward corrupted
To its primal fountain.
Look! another ghost I behold approaching
But not my father's now can it be;
I know not whose it is, nor whose am I—
I this phantom here with phantoms alone.
See! it spreads out its hooked hell-wings
And drops from the sky-dome around me blinded
With its thickening night of despair,
As it drives its beak to my soul's own center;
Its Tartarean flight inks the whole welkin

It crows mine eye with its terror—
Oh the Harpy Melancholia again!
It numbs my tongue speechless.

Horatio (concealed).

His flow of words curdles to silence,
His face ices through with crystals of fright,
His eye turns glassy in its fixed glare,
He shrinks as if dodging his dragon's clutch;
How he outstares the empty air!
He sees again a spirit,
Not sighted by me, but not unknown.
Dread battle! he visions his Devil,
And dares look him down in an eye-fight.

Young Prospero (concealed).

That is the deepest note I ever heard
Come out of a human heart;
It maddens me to hear it;
At what fiend unseen does he glower?
His daggered look murders me!

Horatio (concealed).

Not so convulsive—he will hear you!
Stoop lower out of sight!
'Tis not your fiend, you cannot help!

Young Prospero (concealed).

O Heaven! I too am son of a monarch,
 And am chorded within by fate
 Whose words smite me to resonance doleful—
 What am I, and whence!
 I am glad I never saw my mother
 Lest Hamlet's doubt might unson me;
 My father had also a wrongful brother
 Who wickedly seized his dukedom
 And exposed him to death on the sea,
 But he floated safe to this Magic Isle
 After I had fled to Atlantis
 With the boy's thrill of daring adventure,
 Yet with a love fixed deep in my heart,
 Which kept pulling me back, year in, year out,
 Till here I stand undone of my hope,
 Which still has to hope for my Claribel.

Pandora (aside).

Unfortunate lad! I can hear his bosom thump
 Through his worded breath of hapless woe;
 No person he hath responsive to love,
 And still he longs to be loved.
 Then I hear him to be an Atlantid,
 Thither I too aspire.

Rosalind (aside).

That all-sided thrust of Hamlet's sworded doubt
Hath stabbed me too with its problem;
I am, like him, the scion wronged
Of a ruler wronged by his own brother,
From whom I fled to the Forest of Arden
To which my father also was banished,
He and I pre-enacting the counterpart
To Duke Prospero's flight with his daughter;
It recalls the sad days of my lo, forlorn
Of innocence doomed by an uncle's guilt.
But now is the sorrow transcended in love,
And I am the better through trial;
Oft I have wished in the aches of my life
That I might have known my mother
Who vanished beyond out of my infancy;
But such knowledge now makes me afraid
Lest I be haunted with Hamlet's curse.
Him I could never medicine,
The wound of his spirit is gashed too deep
For my power of healing;
Another more soul-tried woman-curer
Must be invoked for his last redemption,
I believe I have seen her, that one high priestess,
The godliest known of all of my sex
Thronging the halls of Shakespearopolis.
But hist! the dark-draped figure starts up anew,

His face changes to another sorrow
As his lips quiver to words
Which are edged with the cut of a saber.

Hamlet (to himself).

My memory throbs in response to my heart
A still different love of woman
Which has also turned to my curse—
Ophelia, thou whose honeyed vows I once lived on,
Sweetest name of the sweetest girlhood,
Thy grace of form and thy glances of music
No longer attune me to happiness!
Thou too art blasted in thy first budding,
With the canker of womanhood—
Can I deem thee better than mine own mother?
Already hast thou as weakling daughter
Suffered thyself to be faithless to me, thy lover,
At bid of thy father, the old Polonius,
Who would pry out my mystery.
So I have thee dismissed to a nunnery,
But it tears in pain every heartstring,
And leaves me solitary in the universe,
No love of woman lights up my life,
She is a tainted thing, so am I—
Motherhood, wifehood, lovehood are quite gone out,
I look up to God's face and I swear
That creation is his greatest mistake,
To be born is the world's first tragedy,

To be sexed is Nature's diabolic deed,
 The generation of the individual
 Is the one great cosmical fall,
 The primal birth of all mortality,
 Yea, it is God's own original sin;
 For why should he create but to damn—

Young Prospero (concealed).

That uproots my whole being—and man's;
 I can see him yonder writhing in Hell,
 His words fall on me like fire-flakes of Satan,
 What shall I do? I hardly can stand
 Beneath the hot strokes of compassion
 Which hammer my heart.

Horatio (concealed).

Young fellow, hold-in thy suspiring sides!
 But I have myself to confess
 Never before have I heard from Hamlet
 Such a deep heart-break of his despair,
 Or from any soul this side of perdition.
 Now I see the last ground of his mystery,
 What makes him enact his play of insanity,
 I glimpse in my mind's eye the spell of the fiend
 Why all creation falls tumbling down on his head
 As if to crush him, poor mortal.
 But the stronger I hear my call to his rescue.
 Mine is to find the soul mediatorial
 Who can undo the demon's obsession.

Young Prospero (concealed).

O Claribel, thou heart of my hope!
 How Hamlet smites thee even as image!
 And me—can I ever recover?
 Yet I pity him too as myself's very self,
 For he also has loved and lost.
 How his word-wounds cut to the center,
 Where my first life-throb lies bleeding!

Pandora (aside).

I like not that dark-grained finder of failure
 Who flings rotten eggs at all mankind,
 And so befouls himself with their stench.
 Hamlet, it surprises me not one minute
 That Ophelia served up to yourself
 Just yourself with a woman's refusal;
 Surely if the chance were once given to me,
 I would treat you to my best jilt.
 But I fear me much at yon youth's keen cry,
 Shouting the wrench of his destiny;
 Methinks he may dare do himself harm
 So hot seethe in him the words of Hamlet,
 For he too has loved and lost.
 Still I would prophesy he may find healing
 In the heart's medicine dropped from the look
 Of one little woman's sympathy.

Rosalind (aside).

Beware of thy too loud communings!
Thy sympathy yet will betray thee to him,
As to me it has told thy heartbeat's secret.
I, once maker of matches in Arden,
Well can read the prognostications of love,
Which I first learned of myself as teacher,
And then I schooled them to others like-hearted
Till I happily paired my little world
There in the sigh-strown Forest of Lovers;
My old craft I feel pulsing to action
Which joins in one feeling the youth and the
 maiden.

But hold for now! yon crape-thoughted soul
Starts to wag once more its God-shending tongue
To parade still further the blast of its doubt.

Hamlet (to himself).

Never can I marry now and be father
Lest I beget myself and propagate
Another Hamlet just like myself,
To mine own transmitting my curse.
Why should ever I wish to look on my son
As heir of my blood with its taint—
I sprung of a brother's murderer,
For such was my father's ghost in his bidding—

If he were indeed my father—
 And of a mother forsworn of her womanhood.
 Nor could I endure the sight of a daughter
 Lest she be myself, a female Hamlet,
 And endowed from her grandparents both
 With their gifts of murder and perjury.
 O woman! hearken, thou mother of man,
 Borne us thou hast to this welter of birth,
 Over thee hangs our execration and God's,
 Whose first curse fell on all-mothering Eve.
 Without thy womb man had stayed a mere cell,
 An invisible protozoon,
 Unborn, undeveloped, undamned;
 Thy breast has nursed us to life,
 Thy hand has reared our infancy,
 Thy love has lured us to love
 Which is death's very doom,
 Though sweetened with all of pleasure's hypocrisy.
 O love, thou art creation's oldest curse,
 Charming demon, God's own temptress
 Who seduces him to be the creator of all,
 The illusion of the universe,
 Man's Fury that feasts on his heart,
 The vengeful Fate of the House of Hamlet,
 My soul's overdarkening Vampyre—
 See it hover above out of Heaven
 With clawed pinions to skewer me—

Horatio (concealed).

He stops, and refuses himself; his throes calm
 As if utterance flung them out of him,
 And brought him a world of relief;
 Canst thou, fellow-feeler, thus rally thyself—
 Thou, fresh sprig of old Prospero—
 And be soothed of the pain through a suffering
 worded,
 Which lets out the poison of being?

Young Prospero (concealed).

I sense the desperate pang, see his hellish shapes,
 His tongue re-echoes in me its tragic slash—
 Be my confessor, gentle Horatio,
 Hear me too, the lover forlorn,
 Forecasting myself in his word and deed.
 Give me also the balm of thy weal-dropping wisdom,
 dom,
 For I like him am needing for my salvation
 The woman-soul remedial.

Horatio (concealed).

He turns to the deeper forest—but starts not;
 Long have I lain in wait for his secret
 Nethermost buried, unconscious perchance,
 But never before I caught sight of the oracle

Answering his tangled character's riddle.
Surely his mother bore that doubt-brooding dragon
Melancholia, as his twin-sister.
But just this is the fiend from whom I must save
 him,
Such I deem the one work of my life:
The redemption of Hamlet,
As the lost child of his time,
Undoing the deed of his tragedy
That he be born anew from his deepest denial.
But, oh! my brain, how can such renewal be
 wrought?
One faith I feel in me divinely prefixed:
The mother's curse can only be lifted
By the mother's grace.

Pandora (aside).

Let Hamlet pass down to his own black Inferno,
He made it himself just out of himself;
As for me, he may try his own roasting.
But what most worries me, wearing my heart,
Is the worry I see in that youth;
What a gloom overclouds the way of his life!
For he weens of renouncing all love forever,
If I rightly have read his word and his wail,
Contagioned by Hamlet's desperate frenzy
Against the truth of all womanhood.

Rosalind (aside).

Your laddie is sick, I trow, but not unto death;
Not afar is the doctor and dose for his cure,
If I may judge of a malady once mine town too.
But Hamlet's disease is of existence itself,
Deep-seated it rots in his soul,
Exposing the age's taint to the view.
But my remedy cannot reach him
The prescription I learned in the Forest of Arden
Hath no healing for any such ravage.

Pandora (aside).

But see that figure of costumed bereavement
As if he were mourning the loss of his God!
Has he not told quite enough of 'himself?
And still he does nothing but tell—nothing!
Mark, he is going to talk again to his shadow
For the sake of us secret listeners.
He likes to prate of himself to himself,
Letting the blood of his suicide flow out
Into his words him relieving of death.
If his tongue once prick the bag of his blather,
He is saved from his dagger's drawn point,
Which he sheaths while unsheathing his lips—
And that is his salvation.

Hamlet (to himself).

I see a brief rift in the clouded monster
As I look it straight to the eye and speak,
Lipping into the air my trouble.
Lightened my heart feels by myself's outpour;
Mere speech hath a power of easement,
And for the nonce fends off my tragedy,
Wrenching the knife from my hand.
Never have I heard myself so clearly
Tapping my primal fountain of evil,
And making it mightily dash from my tongue
In passionate throbs of my underworld.
Now I know me much more what I am,
Absolved from my death-blow uprisen
Through the words of mine own self-confession,
Which is for the moment remedial.
I thought never to leave this wood alive
When I fled to it alone this morning
All beaten to batter in life's encounter.
But rallied I hearten me now to return
Once more to await the break of new hope
In my palace of Shakespearopolis.

SCENE THIRD.

(After the departure of Hamlet, Horatio and Young Prospero continue their conversation, which is still heard by Pandora and Rosalind in secret.)

Horatio.

Off he glides lighter-stepped through the bush!
Hold, follow him not, he must not know our ruse
For his overhearing—it may recall
His fleeing dragon.

Young Prospero.

I myself see its shadow lower;
The might of Hamlet telling his mystery
Threats to transform me to Hamlet;
Still I must hear him and dare his fate
Or live cowardly free.

Pandora (aside).

The youth stands at bay to challenge the Fury
Whom he has seen wresting the Prince;
Let me push forth to help.

Rosalind (aside).

Be patient and learn something more,
To thy sight the youth is baring his best.

Young Prospero.

Stay, Hamlet, let me bespeak thee,
And with thee share the stress of thy struggle,
I would the companion be of thy fate—

Horatio.

Rest thee thy tongue—he will not be spoken to
Here in this wood of his solitude,
Where he with himself alone will converse;
But at home he becomes another man,
In his mansion he will receive thee royally
With all the outer convention of courtliness.

Young Prospero.

So I shall see him again face to face,
More deeply his history has constrained me
To know in myself the possible man
Than that of any recorded mortal.

Horatio.

I too have learned a pivotal lesson
For the work which looms now the task of my life,
Which is to write my play of Hamlet for Hamlet
That he may find himself first and then the way
out.

Maddened by doubt he would revoke his own birth
With a plunge back into unborn nothingness,

And reverse all time's evolution
 To rescind man's rise to individuality.
 His soul's malady sickens at being's first source,
 Which is a deeper fall than that of Eden
 Tallying the last turn of original sin;
 From Paradise Hamlet anew is driven
 In the ever-sinking line that drops Hellward
 Let down from father Adam.
 But my conscience bids me bend the line round,
 And face him about toward restoration
 At first in writ, then perchance in reality,
 Through his own self-seeing new-born.
 His first mother, now lost, must be made good to
 him
 In the second mother ideal;
 Faith in woman's honor has become more needful
 Than God's truth to his salvation.
 Can I make such balm flow out of my goose-quill?

Pandora (aside).

That is the scribe whom I would pick out
 To write the play of my full spheral life,
 When I am done playing it.
 Rosalind, step thou forth as the model
 Who can woman Hamlet's recovery
 To the artist now waiting.

Rosalind (aside).

I have already declared thee my limit:
My love's herb cannot reach so deep a disease.

Young Prospero.

That writ which you speak of, fain would I see
To salve me too at the center;
Satan has never yet boldened so huge a curse,
It outdoes the dark North's Mephistopheles,
And even the pit's damned Apollyon.
If thou, good friend, canst put to flight this Vam-
pyre,
Piercing it through with the might of thy penpoint,
Thou art the true poet, the maker original,
High artificer of kingdom coming,
The new creator of man.

Horatio.

Expect not too much, and so be happier.
I confess to my long meditation
Of the new drama of reconciled Hamlet
Not to be found in our city of characters,
Saved by the true woman him mediating.

Pandora (aside).

She is the one whom I must take with me
When I go hence, as owned of myself.

Rosalind (aside).

I ween I know what woman she is,
And have seen her undoing fate by her deed
Where she homes in Shakespearopolis.

Young Prospero.

Her spirit I am to watch and work to mine own
That I too be the healed and the healer,
Bearing her sacred eidolon back to Atlantis
Along with the Prince whom thou hast restored
In thy priestly oblation of writ,
Which franchises him of the doom of his age.
And may I speak out my darling hope:
I fain would bring to my folk oversea
Mine own lettered offering born of their world,
Which is my world also now and hereafter,
Transcribing from Heaven in syllables shining
The guilt and the judgment of sad mortality,
Yet with its atonement achieved.

Horatio.

Thy speech casts a halo of dreams in a dream.
But I have nearly forgotten my purpose,
Which was the actors to find for my Hamlet.
Let us divide our search round the coast,
Go you back to the place of your landing

To see if they have come hither;
Then return to this path which leads to the entrance
Where is the high gate of the city,
There you will find me.
Meanwhile I shall circle this inlet,
If perchance their vessel lie anchored
In some leaf-bowered nook unseen.
Let us away.

SCENE FOURTH.

(The two men having departed, the two women hold a dialogue pertaining chiefly to the three kinds of their sex in the Magic Isle.)

Rosalind.

Both are gone their ways, disappearing
 Behind the wood's dense foliage;
 Let us step out into the open
 And snap a fresh breath of relief.
 We have watched three men diversely character'd
 Turning themselves inside out to us,
 Unconscious of our secreted presence.
 What say you to the male spectacle, lady?

Pandora.

I think we have also seen something of woman
 Reflected in the soul's looking-glass of the man.
 I doubt if it has hurt us to take such a glimpse
 At ourselves, spying us out under cover.
 But first let me speak forthright of that Hamlet
 Who stealthily sneaked away to himself
 After filling the woods with his poisonous words
 Which may deadly infect a younger spirit
 Inbreathing their virulence for the first time.

Rosalind.

Yet he is the man most famed as deepest-thoughted
Of our populous Shakespearopolis,
In which he is deemed the citizen typical
More than any other character.

Pandora.

The weakling of fate I damn him
As blaming his mother for his own lapses
Instead of surmounting them through himself
Unto his own glory of manhood;
Even the woman he loves he blemishes
With the stain of his own shortcomings,
Instead of guiding her out of distress,
Pale though she be in all her resolves.
He compels not his life, he is but a yielder,
Even if at times he bristles his limp will
The wrong way to meet the stress of his lot.
No example of hero is that to the youth,
Nor to me—I would not have him.

Rosalind.

Then you ought to favor his resolute friend
Who is busily tracking his crooks through this
forest,
And more busily trailing his mind's vagaries

To find the node of his reason loosened
That it perchance may again be jointed—
The woman's woe made whole by woman's weal.

Pandora.

Tell me, did you ever meet with Hamlet's mother
In that womaned society dwelling your city?
Very unmotherly seems her influence
Upon her son whose words we have heard;
And his sentiments toward her reproached
Waft not the sound of filial tenderness.

Rosalind.

I have seen her oft in the Hamlet mansion
Whither we go for palatial grandeur
And for the wonderful spectacle there,
Our largest center of communal life
And surcharged with the deepest instruction.
True, I may have conversed with her also;
Still I confess she is not of my type
But trains with a different set of our sex
With whom I shun to associate,
Not out of pride, or of loftier blood,
If I dare know so much of my mind,
Not pluming myself with a better character
Although her fame on my shrinking ear
Falls not with a musical tingle.
She is of another make than mine,

In a different mood her creator formed her,
 That I feel to her deeply antipathetic,
 And sway in another circle of spirits
 Who are happily reconciled with their world.
 But she moves in her own dark coterie
 Made up of women remediless
 Who live and die terribly,
 Never knowing repentance for wrong
 Or atonement for sin.

Pandora.

Yes, I see the line which limits you ladies.
 None the less strange it appeareth to me
 That you women of this ideal city
 Are cliqued and clanned and circumscribed
 Just like us females of reality
 Who are used to run in droves all together—
 All except me.
 But as I wish to meet the ladies famed
 Who love and gown in this poetical world,
 Both the blackest sinner and the aureoled saint,
 As well as those characterized in between—
 The comic, the tragic, and the redeemed—
 Tell me more of these sets so contraried
 That I may get some forelook of what I must see
 In the round of my high visitation.
 And then this curious query brands deep my brain:
 How comes it that the same mortal creator

Has formed such beings diverse as Hell and
 Heaven—

He the Promethean man, shaping out of himself
 The world of women eternal?
 How could his mighty soul of creation
 Pass in its art from Rosalind here
 The gracious wielder of love and its matches,
 To the mother of Hamlet queening it yonder
 In the Danish palace of death,
 And swoop his world-wide pinions of Genius
 From Arden's innocent Eden
 Down to the uttermost pit of Inferno
 As if re-enacting the first fall of man
 From his original Paradise.

Rosalind.

You touch me a chord which I too have felt,
 Quizzing myself in wonderment often;
 What can be the source of this dark rift in his
 life
 Which chasms his soul to the bottom?
 And not I alone but all my dear friends
 Have ruminated together the puzzle
 Which lies concealed in the drift of your question,
 Yet is always importuning an answer.
 Now I shall tell you in whisper the story
 Which I have heard wind through the low talk
 Breathing dark hints of our underworld.

Pandora.

The pulse of that secret already I feel
 In thy trembled intonation of voice,
 And I grow frantic to glimpse that shadowy woman,
 For woman she must be, I know,
 She, the original temptress of man
 To his uttermost fatalities,
 All of which shut in a box were once given me,
 But I, the all-gifted, unlidded my gifts.

Rosalind.

Hear, then, thy story's last counterpart:
 Father Shakespeare—I throb his name as a daughter—
 Met his dread fate in the woman enchantress
 Who was again the serpent incarnate,
 As we read in the tale of man's old destiny.
 Infatuate he became to fatuity,
 Though he knew her heart faithless and guilty;
 Open, defiant she was in transgression,
 Still tighter he was enchained in her power,
 And held snared in the lie of her looks
 That the more he resisted the more he was caught;
 She would laugh at his love's mad delirium
 And parade her untruth to his face
 To frenzy the more his helpless despair,
 Finding her pleasure of malice

In the poetical throes of his love-pain,
Which he sighed out into exquisite rhymes
Hymning his torturer, the dread Damozel.

Pandora.

Her I would see above all other women,
The strongest soul I deem her within your city,
The fallen feminine Satan,
The woman who could enthrall the woman-former,
Compelling his genius to make her over
Into his shapes immortal of women
Who entrap great heroes with their black gift
Submissive to female charm demonic.
But tell me her name, for when I meet her
I would duly salute her glorified talent
As the one heroine over all heroines
Throning in many-mansioned Shakespearopolis.

Rosalind.

I mark the might of your stroke sympathetic
Bringing to light some hid strain of kinship
Which bonds both of you at the first gushes of
 being;
But let me finish my answer.
Her title is lisped in an undertone
'Mid small knots of talkers as The Dark Lady;
Her other name is not certainly syllabled
Though I have a mind how it is spelt;

But like a shadow she follows the master
 As if his self's own familiar;
 She has no right abode in this city
 Yet I have glimpsed her darkened eidolon
 Fleet hither amid our Houses of Tragedy,
 Dimly enacting the Queen of those Queens
 Whom she imbreathes with her fatal enchantment,
 But never apart from the poet's presence
 Have I seen her alone in herself;
 She haunts him as sharing his personality,
 As intimate with the run of his being
 In the role of Destroyer,
 Whom he must writhe to ban into writ
 With desperate wrestle of spirit
 That he be not his own self-slayer.

Pandora.

So your high-named artificer godlike,
 Who shapes in his shop all your women and men,
 Cowers under the bolt, not of Zeus Olympian
 But of the eyes of his Dark Lady,
 The fatal enchantress of Genius itself
 Building of tragedy Shakespearopolis.

Rosalind.

So for a time; but she is not all of his being,
 But only one tract of his spirit's experience,
 Which orbs his full cycle of days.

He moves to unfold a new node of his soul-world;
 Now mark another grand turn in his life,
 Which he projects fresh out of himself
 Into new forms of his human creation,
 Transmuting his devil into an angel
 By alchemy born of his gift supernal,
 That he be healed of his Hell
 Re-making each day himself to be whole.

Pandora.

Doubtful I catch at what means your allusion—
 But have you nothing to say of the poet's wife,
 Who with his children is far off in Stratford
 Unwitting of this Dark Lady?

Rosalind.

There too you can find him living at home,
 Ere your traveled round is completed,
 Cheerily with his spouse and his daughters,
 Restored to his heart' first intimate bond,
 The love of his family.

Pandora.

What then has become of that other woman
 Of whom you have darkly limned me the outline
 Who made him the tragic poet,
 Dipping his soul down into that pool
 Where he met the Destroyer face to face,
 Blasting his honor domestic?

Rosalind.

Her he has transcended in might of his Genius
Which drives forth his despair into utterance,
Thus unchaining himself into freedom.
The new woman appears to his vision,
Whom he is to inform with his spirit
Redeeming himself from the Dark Lady
Through the sanative strength of his writ.

Pandora.

What! still another epochal woman!
Are there no men in your deedful city
To pivot the turn of a soul or an age?

Rosalind.

Hold! methinks I see a matronly shape
Hither slowly approach in stately tread;
Her lineaments gentle appeal to me dowered
With all the wealth of Heaven's atonement,
Though she be not one of my social set;
Father Shakespeare wrought in a different mood
When he shaped me to his happier love;
But molding her to his spirit re-born,
He took as his model not the Dark Lady.

Pandora.

Well! here she comes with the look of her words
Which, mothering, throb from her face to her lips.

Hermione (steps up).

I come in search of my daughter Perdita
Who, as a babe, was exposed in these woods,
When torn from me wholly unchilded,
That was some sixteen years ago;
Now she is grown to be a young lady
Blooming the flower of maidenhood,
And needs a mother's outlook on life.

Rosalind.

Honored dame, I know you and your history,
Having watched you enact your trial of fate
Up to the point of pitiless tragedy,
From which you rescued yourself, your child,
 your spouse,
Through a divine long-suffering laid on woman.
Hell itself with its terrible torture,
Its blackest wrong staining purest innocence
Could you never unwife or unmother.

Pandora.

Of an opposite stamp she must be charactered
To that mother and wife of whom we have heard
Just now from her son in a talk with himself.
Methinks she antidotes the mother of Hamlet,
Remedial of the woman's last curse.

Hermione.

I too had a son, a beautiful boy,
Who was taken from me in life's hardest test,
Though I tried unhelped to ward off the stroke
Sent on him by his own guilty father,
Whom still I would save from his deed,
And rescue redeemed to my bosom.

Rosalind.

That miracle too has been wrought by thy spirit
And imparts its healing to those who may see it;
As for me, I adore thee as one far above me,
I never would dare thy womanhood's test,
Preferring to live in my Forest of Arden.

Pandora.

Many grades of this city's known ladies,
But the most heroic of all your heroines
Seems this new Madonna as mother and wife,
For she overtops with her deed the Dark Lady
Here in the rich realm of your Shakespearopolis
And in the love-life of its architect lofty,
Undoing the work of that feminine black-artist,
Who e'en by the might of her name threw a spell
Which uncovered a nighted strain of myself
Wherein I felt me to her related.

Rosalind.

Then you too are restored by this woman
 Most tried in all the hard fates of her sex
 That even her image becomes remedial.
 I confess that I cannot reach to her deed,
 Though I may share if I appreciate;
 Yet I would make a tragedy out of her lot,
 If it were laid on me by the Powers.
 A mediation far deeper is hers
 Than mine with the lovers idyllic in loveland;
 For she hears the call from above and within
 To restore the utter wrong-doer as husband,
 Revealing womanly love in itself
 Untainted by outer circumstance.

Pandora.

Nor am I quite ready to climb such a height,
 I would quit such a man and take another.

Hermione.

I must ramble this wood more thoroughly
 In search of my daughter.

Rosalind.

May we not follow and help a little?

Pandora.

I too would like to see the young lady
How she resembles her origin.

Hermione.

I would bethink me in silence.

Rosalind.

She is off, but you will see her again
In the full round of her life mediative,
Reversing the tragic doom of this city
Which mirrors the soul it mirroring too.

SCENE FIFTH.

(Rambling through the Magic Wood Horatio, full of his new call, meets Hermione in search for her daughter, and to her he imparts her supreme mission of redeeming Hamlet.)

Horatio (alone).

One idea sole obsesses me now,
Like a spirit sent from beyond to bid me
Through the might of its voiceless evangel,
And from my dear reposeful philosophy
It bans sweet peace of the hall academic
Where I long have loitered, learning and listening
With my friend the young Prince of Denmark
Now strangely darkened in mind.
That one idea which hales me to action
Is the soul's restoration of Hamlet
From the clutch of the dread Destroyer.
Such is the burning task of this whole city
Which else of itself becomes tragic in him,
And sinks under the crash of his doom
Without the hope of its spirit's last ransom.
And the poet also must fall with his work
And become the hero of his own tragedy
If he destroy his mind's deepest personage,
And make himself perish in the one character

Who is stamped with his soul's very impress;
 For Hamlet I see to be Shakespeare
 Sinking away in his own self-negation.
 Thus a new duty weighs down upon me
 Putting to flight my life meditative:
 I must haste to undo Death's stern decree
 Hanging over my friend, his house, his world,
 Yea even his poetic creator.
 Such is mine to perform in word and in deed:
 I task me re-building the drama of Hamlet
 And unclenching the grip of his fate
 Unto his own and his time's salvation.
 This work, unless I write and for him enact,
 I too shall be damned to his end.

But what is my means for such new office?
 I must pierce to the depth of his malady:
 Woman has cursed him as son and as lover,
 Woman alone can undo her own curse,
 Bringing the balm of her spirit redeemed.
 Then on the deed will rain the uppermost blessing,
 For in him the poet, his maker,
 Will be restored from the eclipse of his life—
 Aye, from the Dark Lady of Babylon,
 Who will lure him down to her own dared death
 If he be not disthralled of her spell
 By a new remedial scripture
 Which will cancel his own written Hell-fire

Through the might of his healful creation.
Grand is the stake as it rises before me :
The whole century, all civilization
Threats to topple down into the last abyss,
The gruesome graveyard of buried worlds,
So joined is it with the spirit of Hamlet
That it shall perish too in his tragedy,
For he is man's culture self-murdered
Unless retrieved from the blast of its doubt
And harmonized with the sovereign order.
Again I confess to myself my last faith :
I also must fall in the falling ruins
Which menace humanity whole in Hamlet
Unless with his I work my redemption
Both in the word and the act,
For if I find him not the recovery
I myself am lost—I, Horatio.

Ha ! to the eye of hope rises a star,
And to the heart's prayer dawns a fulfilment :
Out of the distance hitherward moves a lady
Gravely treading the leaves of the glen
With a look of heavenly pondering.
Most timely it hits with my prayer,
I am in search of the woman redemptive,
Who can bring back the far-astroy Hamlet
To a faith in his mother's half of his race,
And thus reconcile him again to his birth,

Him starting anew to live over his life
 Even re-planting the seed of his origin.
 She approaches! methinks I have known her!
 'Tis Hermione, the mother-soul mediatorial
 Of our tragical Shakespearopolis,
 Who has outfated her own fate nethermost
 And now may do for another poor mortal
 What she has done for herself.
 Aye, she must, else she too will be damned!
 Behold! her presence remedial
 Even her look hath a healing essence,
 She can mother the unmothered Hamlet
 And once more bring him forth new-born,
 Even if he be now three decades ago.

Hermione.

Have you seen my daughter Perdita?
 I have heard that she still is alive
 Humbly abiding somewhere in this wood
 Through which I still in hopeful suffering search.

Horatio.

Well met, Hermione! you come like a deity
 Unawares, yet fervently prayed for.
 I have seen you before in your own fair temple
 Builded yonder on a height of the city,
 And have watched you enact your long-suffering
 Which conquered the man and won the God.

I need you for a like work of healing
 Which is to be shown in its worth ideal
 By my troupe of actors who are to play
 Before the young Hamlet my drama
 Which turns on the mother triumphant
 In the sharpest trial of her Destroyer,
 And rescuing husband, offspring, and self
 Through her true mediation of spirit.
 I would reconcile him, my friend and fellow-man,
 With his own genesis which has discorded him
 Till he threatens to strike the one last end-all
 Of the pain of mortality.

Hermione.

What! me a woman!
 Why not take as his savior a man?
 Many a hero you have in your city
 Who should be able to meet such a test.
 Then who is the priest who shrives all the world,
 And hallows the woman herself unto God?
 It is the man, from the little church curate
 Up through the long hierarchal ladder
 To the throne of the Highest in Heaven—
 It is always a man.

Horatio.

Methinks the whole line is helpless for Hamlet,
 The old good way he cannot travel.

Nor can he be saved now by age-built prescription.
 Still he must be redeemed and we must help him,
 He is not to be lost, the honest denier,
 Else you and I shall sink down along
 As unworthed of our spirit's highest heritage,
 And with us together all Shakespearopolis.

Hermione.

But the philosopher you are of fame;
 Then why not make his cure the pivotal test
 Of the worth of your philosophy
 Which you and he did learn at Wittenberg
 Where sounds the weal-trumpeting University.
 You are just the man, the philosopher,
 Make valid in use your lofty-worded new lore,
 For what is it worth unless it heal whole
 The cleft spirit hurt unto death?

Horatio.

I feel the keen prick of your mind's point,
 A gift of surprise from tender Hermione's tongue;
 Still let me dare a moment philosophize
 Why the man philosopher is unmeet
 To salve with his cure this malady's curse:
 The perfect heart makes whole the unperfect,
 Imparting its all to the lesser's weal,
 And thus it approveth the best what it is
 Ever restoring itself by giving itself.

A woman pure must cleanse a woman's taint,
 And wash out the sin of her sex's decadence;
 She must also be the mother and wife,
 The twinned womb of all living creation
 And therewith of love's primordial birth
 Into the hitherto helpless void of the soul,
 For it is she who bears love to the universe
 From its first fountain of God.
 There is not a man in Shakespearopolis
 Who can perform such an innermost work
 For closing this breach of the spirit;
 And not every woman here hath the gift
 Sharing so deep in the prime personality
 As to tap its all-healing fountain creative;
 Possibly one other woman within this city
 I know, who might—after you.

Hermione.

You heap me with burden of honor too great!
 But think of the past! Have not the sages
 The prophets, the founders of high religions
 Which mediate man anew with his God,
 Have they not all been men—all of them?

Horatio.

Let me speak you a word out of my studies
 On which I have spent still years' meditation.
 In the Orient the man is the prophet,

The maker of faiths and the sole mediator.
 Already in Hellas we hear of the priestess
 Even higher placed than the priest,
 As at Delphi she voiced from the God his oracle.
 But at Tauris the woman Iphigenia
 Was priestess and missionary as well,
 Saving the heathen, saving the Greek
 Through her office divine.
 Now in our latest temples of Shakespearopolis,
 The woman is throned the High Priestess,
 But in herself, in her own right, through her deed
 She performs her priestly function supreme
 To rescue the man, the city, the world,
 Aye, the poet himself from his tragedy.
 Who is she? You—

Hermione.

That dizzies me! on too lofty a pedestal!
 Quite at the city's top, and History's too!
 Why, you make me remake my very maker!
 But for what am I exalted so suddenly?

Horatio.

The fiercest malice of fate could not fate you,
 The last stroke of despair never made you despair;
 Though whelmed under the bitterest curse of God
 You never cursed God,
 And thus you rose to his rank as divine

In your soul's own canonization.
 You saved the innocent, you redeemed the guilty,
 Rewarded the faithful, and ransomed yourself
 From all Hell's outpoured malignity;
 So you undid your own tragedy
 And now you are to undo that of Hamlet,
 And with him that of Hamlet's creator
 Through your visioned deed of his rescue
 On a scene enacted in view of the ages.

Hermione.

Oh! must I again be crucified
 With the pain of all those years of sacrifice?
 I shrink from this new tribulation,
 God Himself endured but one crucifixion,
 And must I, weak woman, dare suffer the second?
 I say, take a man as your redeemer,
 The test I may not abide if repeated.

Horatio.

Have you not watched throughout our city
 That the creator of its people of souls,
 Its myriad maker poetic
 Calls up a woman for duty redemptive,
 And allots her a man as helpmeet
 Often of not much help?

Hermione.

If to the cross you must nail the woman
 To save your tragic Shakespearopolis,
 Why not take Rosalind, winsome and graceful?
 The favorite everywhere and of all,
 I met her an hour ago in these woods,
 Nor is she without experience of service;
 You will find her strolling over yonder
 With a new Lady just come to this Isle
 Who wishes to take a course of its discipline,
 Which you can impart in the lore of your drama
 Harmonizing anew the soul of estrangement.

Horatio.

She would decline it, for well do I know her,
 Rosalind is not built to your pattern,
 Though she a character lives mediating.
 Hers is a lighter sphere and different,
 That of the merry and skillful heart-joiner
 Soothing the lover's small troubles;
 Life's outer rents she deftly can mend,
 But when the soul is broken within through guilt,
 A deeper remedial nature is needed,
 Such as is yours, trained by sacred suffering
 Which you, the innocent, gave as ransom of wrong.
 So I must have you enact your saving deed
 Before the Prince in the Danish Palace;

For the drama is the only medicine
Which touches the seat of his malady
Mirroring outward his mind to his mind.
But your deed reaches out all-healing,
For him first, for me too, aye for yourself,
And well for the builder of Shakespearopolis.

Hermione.

What a turn of my vision within and without me!
Yonder I feel I behold my lost daughter!
Since she was a babe I have not kissed her,
And with her I glimpse her young lover
Of whom rumor has thrown me some glints
Which I fleet me to verify.
To the pair I straightway must fly with a blessing
As healful to me in the giving
As to them in the getting.

Horatio.

Will you not share us the love of the mother?

Hermione.

Friend, I cannot quit without the confession:
I have to perform the work you have asked me,
For the duty weighs on me not to be shaken.
Having restored Leontes my husband,
I, in response to your God-winning prayer,
Must restore, too, Hamlet—else I am lost

Through the dread sin of my dooming refusal,
 Losing my worthiest gift now won by my trial;
 If I have gained the good I have to impart it
 When holily prayed for, else it will quit me
 recreant;

Thus my best deed again I shall do and again,
 Keeping it bright and alive in the practice.
 So let me dare once more be crucified
 Once more than even the Lord
 And once more and again once more,
 Till I win mine own last atonement.
 But look! how disinctly I see now my daughter
 Suddenly bloom the sixteen years of her girlhood,
 From the moment she a smiling infant
 Was torn from my mothering bosom!
 Farewell now—I must go—my heart
 Beats out before me into their presence.
 But list to my spirit's own promise:
 I shall meet you at call in the Palace of Hamlet,
 There anew to enact my more than death,
 And through my mortal purgation upborne,
 To attain mine own resurrection.

Horatio (alone).

The new Madonna hearkens her mother-heart,
 And longing she wings away to her child.
 Such is the woman's worth remedial,
 Redeeming her lorn self in her daughter

And showing her spirit's weal over others:
Can I put her character into my drama
And fix it eternal in writ,
Where she can keep doing her ransom's deed
For all who may visit Shakespearopolis?
Thus my lines may round the full life of Hamlet,
Leading him out of his tragic abysses
To his spirit remaking itself to be whole;
So his life-course may mirror that of mankind
And even image the process of God.
I ween now I glimpse the three forms of women
Who rise at the nodes of the poet's own destiny—
The love and the fall and then the recovery
Cycling the soul of Shakespearopolis.
But here come the actors whom I must greet
And bring to their quarters where is their labor,
For at once must begin the rehearsal,
Since on their work may depend Hamlet's fate,
And perchance mine too,
As well as Hermione's higher fulfilment
Which gleams her life's rounded completion
As the true likeness for all of the All,
Integral making character's temple of beauty
Gleaming the sovereign sheen of womanhood's
 worth.

The Shakespeariad

Part Second

SHAKESPEAROPOLIS

OR

THE MAGIC CITY OF THE MAGIC ISLE

ARGUMENT.

Shakespearopolis in its entirety is conceived as a community in which all of Shakespeare's characters form a social system with its proper laws and governance. Hence the city has its own institutional order, and, accordingly, its own distinct soul and consciousness apart from its individual members. This universal character, embracing all of Shakespeare's particular characters organized into their one society, is the final fruitage of the poet's work. Such a social world lies back of this Shakespeariad which has to bring the same to light.

It should be added that this ordered city in its completeness must be regarded as the supreme manifestation of Shakespeare's personality set forth into the world and realized as an existent, ever-active fact. Moreover, its development is his development, its outer is his inner, showing the very process of his total achievement. The idea of Shakespearopolis is, therefore, the idea of Shakespeare himself in his completion and fulfilment.

Book First

INDUCTION.

From the forest of the Magic Isle the scene passes to its center, which is a walled city whose edifices rise up along a mountain-side to a height on which stands a classic temple in outline, but indwelt of fantastic forms, and known as Prospero's Mansion. Various entrances pierce the wall, through which the multitudes are entering to inspect the city.

SCENE FIRST.

Chorus Salutatory.

Welcome all ye to Shakespearopolis
And see it now your spirits' ideal home,
The growing capital of lettered Earth,
The temple of mankind's best lore,
Whence sings the Muse's farthest-sounding strain
Tuning the ages past and still to be
To measured cadence of Creation's song.
Hail to the Orient, the Occident,
Both come together in this Magic Isle
Which also interlinks the North and South,
Between whose souls it lies both spaced and timed,
Joining in one embrace the old and new.
Behold, they march in massive caravans,

With faces deepened into thought's last home,
Or brightened with the laughter of the moment,
From aged Cathay and from Atlantis young,
Streaming in silence through these airy gates
Which pierce the high-walled girdle of the city,
That all may see the multitudes within,
The famous dwellers of its mansioned halls
Whom they must know if they would know them-
selves,

And know the vaster time in which they live.
And yet more deeply runs their final quest:
For they would find the one great human soul,
Creator of this world and all its shapes,
The Genius who remakes them to be one
From what they once were made to be in life,
The same beneath mankind's fierce difference.
The oversway of antique gloried Rome
Was that of armed mind and violence;
Here is upbuilt another polity:
The warriors hither come to be overcome,
The willing captives of this commonwealth
Which they then capture as their noblest prize,
And bear away all that they leave behind,
That others, too, may find the perfect gift
Whose taking is the giving it away,
And own possession everybody's own,
The victors vanquished in their victory.
Advance, ye armies, marching hitherward

From out the rising and the setting sun,
 Ye who look up and see the Southern Cross,
 And ye who watch the Pleiads in their round,
 Now storm this treasured city's golden mint
 Of souls word-stamped to all eternity;
 Enter its palaces and seize its folk,
 All can be yours, the men, the women too,
 Even the edifices you may have
 If you can lift them up and bear them off;
 Aye, the whole city is your spirit's spoil
 Not to be parcelled out in petty shares,
 But each of you can own the whole of it,
 And still the city stay all of itself,
 In its own right, while too your property.
 Seize here the finest gems of human speech,
 The purest diamonds strown of wisdom's thought,
 The dearest daring maidens for the love of man,
 Take them, they're yours, but you must win them
 first,
 And you can have them all as yours of right,
 Not one alone is given to one alone,
 That's not the law of this high wedding-feast,
 But all and each belong to each and all
 In marriage universal of the mind
 Which holds of us the sovereign's masterdom.
 Welcome again, ye pilgrims to this Isle
 Whose rounded rim of woods ye have pierced
 through

Unto its centering height of pinnacles
 Which now you must behold with vision pure:
 I, the Chorus voicing my whole people,
 Bid you the freedom of our city's heart;
 The mansions are all ready for your coming,
 And every soul is open to your gaze
 Down to the bottom of its deepest rift,
 If you have sight to see its primal home.
 Elsewhere the soul's last chasms are covered up,
 Hid in disguise of human intercourse;
 But inside out the man must turn himself
 If he would live the life or dwell the world
 Of spirit-built Shakespearopolis.

Voice (from above).

Ye twain of woman-souls, be ye the first
 To enter this high realm to view your own—
 The lofty dames wrought of transparent Heaven,
 And also grained in black of Devildom,
 Within whose hearts are writ in flame the fates
 Of spirit-built Shakespearopolis.

SCENE SECOND.

Rosalind and Pandora.

(*Entrance through an open gate which leads out of the girdling Wood of the Magic Isle to the city. The passage shows an arch of plaited vines laden with flowers. Underneath are passing the two women, who converse.*)

Pandora.

Quite a change of impression! From the natural to the artificial, from solitude to society, from poetry to prose!

Rosalind.

This is the arbor which leads to my cottage, a somewhat sylvan quarter of the city, in which lies my Forest of Arden, where lovers have always found some poetry embowered in the rustic scenery.

Pandora.

Strangely remindful, even familiar the outlook appears. Yes, I see these poetical trees are still carved with their lines of love, little atoms of passion.

Rosalind.

Here is my door-step, overhung with the leaves and twigs of the grove. Let us rest and take a fresh glance.

Pandora.

I never was here before, yet, methinks, I have seen this bower already and wandered through these trees. I have a reminiscence of meeting an old acquaintance in each bush; wherever I turn, I pass from waking to a dream. And you, Rosalind, I must have met in another state. And that song which softly wreathes overhead seems not to kiss my ear for the first time.

Rosalind.

Perhaps you will understand your dream better when I say this is the Forest of Arden. Here I am agelessly in love, and stroll outside of time in these idyllic haunts. I note that you have seen me here, as have millions. But never mind me now. Stand on this little knoll and tell what you behold lifting skyward.

Pandora.

A glimmer of your city taking many colors as the sunlight shoots through it making rainbows.

But that is only the outside. What lies inside, is the world I have yet to see. Little fragments of Shakespearopolis I have watched from afar, as I was approaching hither; I glimpsed the very spot where we stand. But I seek more than a glimpse, I want the thing itself. I am glad to find Rosalind, but I would like to speak face to face with all her sisters, young and old, who are reported to be the secret sovereigns of this realm, where abides the rule supreme of Love.

Rosalind.

You are worthily ambitious. I shall give you some help, but you will need other guides to know even the women of this community. Look yonder; you will mark the personages fleeting through the scene, sometimes alone, sometimes in groups; then you will observe a house with people in it, the walls being transparent, yea, the people being transparent, even in their souls.

Pandora.

I have been watching the play of appearances, which seem the most real of human beings, yet are ghostly; the most insubstantial yet everlasting. There is that Hamlet; he has already died, yet is deathless even in his death. A group of temples floats before my ken as if air-built, separate but

interwound by some inner tie; I cannot anchor them, still less intake a vision of the whole; yet they all proclaim, "We are one."

Rosalind.

You speak the difficulty and the goal. All Shakespearopolis is innerved to one great organism, yea, is insouled to one great personality. To envisage the latter in full is what you come for, I dare premise.

Pandora.

No light task as I forecast. But I must take this city by my spirit's assault, or stay forever defeated of my destiny. I never can reach Atlantis, my hope of Heaven, except through this Magic Isle and what it holds.

Rosalind.

The work cannot be done from here. You must penetrate inside each house, inside each body with its microcosm; you will have to make many thoughtful promenades through lordly corridors and high-arched domes, not omitting plebeian alleys and the night-side of life, interviewing great and small in their own estate.

Pandora.

But I do not like to troop about solitary and see things all to myself. Among the surging crowd of visitors do you think I shall find any acquaintance who might be a sympathetic uplift in the journey? It is hard to travel alone.

Rosalind.

Among the millions you will find the one, just the one without whom the millions are as none. I know that road, for I have travelled it. And you will meet other women of this city going the self-same way in hot pursuit of the one only one who for them is all or rather just the All. Love is the Demiurge not only of Shakespearopolis but of the Universe, of whose vastness we put at the heart those little lovers, man and woman.

Pandora.

I mark that you are still the magnificent merry match-maker, Rosalind. But tell me how many people live within these walls, inhabiting the lofty mansions and the lesser abodes, some of them being but half-built.

Rosalind.

A right question which I can answer when in the tune. But just now I ween that I can like-

wise tell the very name responding to the hidden query of your heart? Shall I speak it out?

Pandora.

I wish I were at present in the mood for your light funning. Still your hint has stirred in me an ancient throb far back to the rearward of hoary Time, for I was as young ages ago as I am now. I once loved Prometheus thousands of years past, the old Titanic man-shaper who wrought in defiance of Zeus; so he was chained to Mount Caucasus, and cannot get loose or die, since he, though eaten every day by a vulture, grows back to himself again in the night.

Rosalind.

Poor Titan, I might try to free him if I could leave my Orlando, whom I prefer to Prometheus.

Pandora.

That I deem my last goal: to go back and release him even from Zeus. But now I have to take unto myself this new Prometheus of your city, the shaper of men and still more the shaper of women, especially of women who can be redeemers. I have sighted already that unique drama of his three supreme Ladies—you, my Rosalind, first; then the

nameless shadowy form of Satan womaned, just the Dark Damsel; finally the mothering restorer whom you call——

Rosalind.

Hermione—she whom you are yet to know and to fulfil, I hope.

Pandora.

The very trinity of womanhood they move before me in a kind of choral round which hymns me the poet's own deepest cycle of life's experiences—how he has joyed, how he has suffered, and how he has recovered. Perchance too it suggests from afar a model on which every human soul's career is planned.

Rosalind.

Dimly some such conception of Father Shakespeare and of his work has fled through my rather unmindful mind. But I have also in my higher moods carried the same thought higher: quite up to God Himself, who likewise must have His spirit's process.

Pandora.

You say Father Shakespeare, but is he not mother too of his people, especially of you who have more of his soul in you than any man or all the men in your Forest of Arden? I dare the

thought that he in this regard also is like God who is both father and mother of all Time's creatures. The Poet re-enacts the Creator, as the Creator pre-enacts the Poet, not as one parent but as both, of his characters, with whom this city is filled to overflow. Mother Shakespeare, then, I am going to stress, bringing to the fore my feminine right to the greatest world-builder and soul-maker that the ages have yet seen.

Rosalind.

Gay-spirited Rosalind has also had her sober minutes of reflection upon this matter. Physically, Shakespeare was of course masculine, but even in physical creation both sexes could spring from his loins, and actually did, male and female, son and daughter, each of whom I saw him fondle at Stratford, though his boy Hamnet passed away early and thus wove a strain of sorrowful reminiscence through the rest of his life, often traceable in the words spoken by his play-folk.

Pandora.

No doubt he has a dark thread of melancholy spun through his whole being, else how could he have felt Hamlet? But let us hear your conclusion, for your discourse has shifted away from its goal.

Rosalind.

From his physical I pass to his spiritual creation, wherein lay his eternal portion; he was thereby both man and woman, creating or rather re-creating both. His Genius, generative of souls, would project them into male and female forms of whom I know and commune with hundreds here in Shakespearopolis—indeed I am one of them myself. And let me ask after your origin—who are you and to what end?

Pandora.

I have already told on myself a good deal, but not the deepest. My aspiration is also to be a shaper of soul-folk but as a woman. From antique Prometheus I stride with the centuries to modern Shakespeare, seeking to fulfil my destiny which lies in the future. I would take up into my conception the supreme male creators of the ages. The woman universal as likewise creative of worlds and souls I glimpse, perchance the super-woman realizable in far-off Atlantis. The thought swells me to the point of breaking my very mortality. I must now forth into the fields and sky, to be alone with the Alone that I may recover my losing self, though not yet lost.

Rosalind.

To that flight I have been unable to wing myself with you. I think I shall stay here with my Orlando in the Forest of Arden. But you are going to tour the city and its palaces?

Pandora.

By all means, for I must pick it up and carry it along with me, perchance round the world. I have in mind to build it anew, rising to be the architect of another Shakespearopolis which holds the coming order with its new woman creative and man. But I shall see you again, for you have your place in the round I am making.

Rosalind (alone).

Off she sweeps with her Junonian gait earth-contemning. She is seemingly bound to break something, possibly herself. Such ambition never was mine; I am glad to be made just this little woman, not to make great women as does Shakespeare, or such as she dreams. But here comes my dear Orlando with another sweet little love-verse; how satisfied I am at the drop from God's creation to man's kiss!

Pandora (alone).

From the Magic Wood I have brought an image
which will not leave me, but winds through all
my loftiest ambitions. I forefeel that I cannot
stop short of Atlantis. But at present forward to
the Magic City!

SCENE THIRD.

(On a precipitous side of the city is seen a somewhat bare rock-built entrance, lofty but narrow, at which Young Prospero is waiting for Horatio, who soon comes up from the Magic Isle, where he has been looking after Hamlet.)

Horatio.

You are prompt. Did you observe anybody enter this gate?

Young Prospero.

As I was approaching, in the distance I caught sight of the dark figure of Hamlet vanishing cloud-like just here through the wall.

Horatio.

Then he has gone home to his Residence inside. Here is the passage through which we are to reach the city.

Young Prospero.

So we are actually entering Shakespearopolis, the unique city of Immortals on this globe. I feel so queer, as if I were going into a new state of the soul, to meet people with framework so transpicuous that I can look through it into their very person-

ality. Even this gate by which we are passing has a character of its own, somewhat intangible and unreal.

Horatio.

Your feeling is proper now, though it is likely to change hereafter, when you know more and look deeper. This gate I deem my gate, as I always go through it, since it leads directly to the mansion of Hamlet, where I abide. Other folk call it the philosophic gate, after me I suppose, since I studied especially philosophy at the University of Wittenberg, and am inclined to enter every domain by that path, even the Universe.

Young Prospero.

I confess that the passage seems steep, stony and hazy to me, and the whole structure of this gate turns dreamlike while the pillars supporting its inwardly bent but lofty arch do not look solid. Come, it may topple on our heads if we tarry under it too long.

Horatio.

Be not afraid; now we are inside and can inspect at leisure the city reposing in the sheen of its own sun. But let me tell you something: there are many other gates to Shakespearopolis beside this philosophic gate; you must not fail to view

them all in your trip, for each has its own beautiful archway, as well as its experience for your complete knowledge.

Young Prospero.

From this open vista I begin to see somewhat! Behold the common abode and then the royal palace! How the people flit about, weirdly double, seemingly spectre outside but reality within, so life-like yet ghost-like! Indeed they appear ever turning themselves inside out. A wonderful self-revelation each individual becomes; though he tries to conceal his soul, he reveals it in the very act of concealment. You, for instance, are one of these strangely extroverting phantoms who shows me his brain unskulled and even voiced with speech. But let the miracle pass; now tell me, my dear guide, how many inhabitants in this city.

Horatio.

That question I have often asked myself and sought the answer both from my own reckoning and from the arithmetic of others. The enumeration differs according to the standard of individuality which one may apply. I have never been able to satisfy myself as to the number of my fellow-citizens, though I have lived here quite all my life, except my student years at Wittenberg with

my friend Hamlet. Some countenances dart a moment past me and then vanish nameless, as if not yet individuated from the vast microscopic protoplasm of humanity. Forms float in and out half-born, not a few march by speechless though fully shaped and accoutred on the outside. I sometimes sit and watch the human atoms not yet evolved but gliding momentarily across the stage, like bubbles from an Oceanic whirlpool rising and giving one keen flash of being, then at once dropping back into the differenceless waters. I tell you this city contains a considerable measure of the original germ-stuff of mankind, uncounted and uncountable, revealing every human stage from the first cellular speck of a man up to the creative builder of the whole city and of all its folks, he being his own greatest personage in building personages.

Young Prospero.

Your words drive to the bottom of my aspiration: I long to be an architect of personality, and form men anew like antique fabled Prometheus and modern real Shakespeare. This tells the deepest reason why I have voyaged to this city all the way from remote Atlantis. I confess to you my dearest ambition: I would lift this city, the whole of it from foundation to pinnacle, and bear it

away on the wings of my spirit, to rebuild it in another clime and in a new civil order. But enough of my dreaming for the present—you will hear more of it ere I am done with you. Tell me now, dropping all this countless genesis still in the shell or even in the cell, tell how many chicks are hatched out into daylight and run about with wee piping throat, or are grown up to be the biggest chanticleers with far-carrying cock-a-doodle-doo.

Horatio.

Your sudden change of mood and speech perplexes me, but I suppose it is your way. Let the oracle which you interrogate so oracularly give answer as straight as he knows how. In Shakespearopolis I feel personally acquainted with some five hundred souls and I have brushed against or seen distinctly perhaps five hundred more. Thus my census of the city's population runs up toward a thousand individuals, great and small, from the one-worded to the many-worded, from the zero soul to an infinite faculty.

Young Prospero.

Your artificer has, I see, personalized humanity afresh in its representatives, and put these into his community. But of all his persons he must him-

self be the creative epitome, hence he is the one here whom I would like most to know. Can you hint a brief cue how I can find him?

Horatio.

You may glimpse a fragment of him in each of his people, but to penetrate to his total Self and commune with that requires a long, perchance a life-long apprenticeship.

Young Prospero.

Let us start: give me now my first lesson on the outside, though I may never get inside. What are those objects yonder which seem houses or structures of the city?

Horatio.

A good initiative. It is well to look at the external first. Those dwelling-places are indeed homes, each of which contains a set of characters bringing forth a common deed, or if you wish the ordinary name, a drama. Residences they rightly appear; some are lying quite flat on the earth and in the open, others rise mystically into cloudland and float mid interplaying streaks of sunshine. You will note that they are builded quite after one basic pattern, yet with ever new application. Still they are not fixed in stone or wood, they move in them-

selves; they are constructed of motions, indeed of actions whirling curiously around within themselves.

Young Prospero.

Edifices they are, as I preceive, in which you Shakespearopolitans dwell and do your deeds, however mighty and even world-embracing. In that little pile up yonder, which I recognize, is enacted the greatest event of olden history whose hero is Julius Caesar, who has had many such residences erected for him on the globe all the way down time, but this is the most famous and impressive, and probably the most lasting of them all. I see it now, it has been familiar from boyhood, but it stands or rather moves with other edifices which I do not know. Behold their outlines creep into the mist and then flit in part to the light again, as if playing with their spectators! I cannot distinguish them from here, there must be quite a multitude. Tell me how many of these unique halls are clustered on yon top?

Horatio.

That is more easy to figure than the number of their dwellers. I count thirty-six exactly; I have been in them all and have seen their chief people; indeed I have watched the master himself mark his right children, and even catalogue their abodes.

Still I have heard hot dispute about the count; my neighbor, Holofernes the philologue, claims to see the thirty-seventh, and some other prying enumerators have tried to include in the city's walls several indifferent outside shacks. But never mind these vagaries; confine yourself to the three dozen structures over there. You will find in them difference enough, scaling them upward from the worst to the best.

Young Prospero.

Look here! right on our path lie three pied rambling shanties all of them stamped with the name of an old unheroic English king. What a lot of rampant nobility ever fighting or getting ready to fight!

Horatio.

Let them pass for the present. Only young ragged Shakespeare can be seen in their make, and he badly patched. No mightily created personages can be found in them notwithstanding their trappings and blue blood.

Young Prospero.

And here lie three or four structures of a wholly different pattern, whose architecture seems more

drawn out than the other thirty-six—less concentrated, more linear and less rounded. Are they not a significant part of your city?

Horatio.

Personally I deem them not weighty members of our community, except this last to which we have now come. Regard it well, for it is the exceptional group not merely of this quarter, but of the whole city, indeed I may say, of the architect himself. It is hardly a house, but rather the stones of a house, many of them exquisitely sculptured but strown along a very irregular line.

Young Prospero.

I have noted it well; I have been counting them as they lie scattered upon our path. One hundred and fifty-two separate blocks all of a size and build—a long vertebral column completely unvertebrated, evidently belonging to some lost or unborn organism; whose it is? What is it? And here at the end of the tail are two more of them, small caudal joints quite disconnected from the rest. Is it the skeleton of some untimed megatherion which underlies your whole Shakespearopolis?

Horatio.

Quit your fancy and come down to straight eyesight: do you not see that man yonder taking shape and darting dimly through these atomic wisps of a shadowy soul-world, of which he seems the very incarnation? That is the builder of this entire city named after him, being none other than William Shakespeare in person, not disguised in his thousand characters, as he is elsewhere. Here he strolls and tells on himself imparting his life in its own reality, flinging out these wee bits of his quivering heart, often gay in simple description, but oftener deep-toned in confession, repentance and expiation.

Young Prospero.

I would speak with him face to face, or soul to soul. But he lapses, seemingly transformed, vanishing, and in his place coquets gloomily a weird, spectral, night-clad woman—who?

Horatio.

Look at her well, for she is, to my mind, the most pervasive, yet the most elusive personality in all Shakespearopolis. She is known everywhere as the Dark Lady and has become a kind of second

self of the architect, the woman-soul of him as it were, being ingrown into his very Genius through the overwhelming potency of his love for her, demonic though she be. So he has builded her in some phase into all the most imposing temples of this city, though she appears nowhere distinctly in her own person, except as she flits fitfully through these blocks of a house (but no House) a dark shadow pursuing her lover into his most deeply creative moments. Thus she drives him to construct afresh many fateful women whom you are yet to witness ever re-enacting their tragic deeds here in their eternal habitations built by their creator.

Young Prospero.

Then am I to get only this little peep of her clouded face, as she glances out of these brief singing atoms? I would see her whole character presented in action.

Horatio.

The Master has never sculptured her shape into complete individuality, though he fames her as his Muse, his Siren, yea his soul's dark Temptress whom he has to ban into writ to save himself from her tragedy.

Young Prospero.

I would inspect her more closely—but she is gone, turned into a grey strip of cloud-wrack. How disappointing! The slippery witch!

Horatio.

You are not the first one unable to catch her—she permits no intimate acquaintance of mortals. But look beyond at the vast variety of folks! Your forehead wrinkles another interrogation—smooth it out.

Young Prospero.

Your answer pushes onto my tongue a new question which has kept gurgling through my brain with a sort of violence: of what people, tribe, nation, or race are the inhabitants of this Utopian settlement? It appears the most miscellaneous crowd I ever looked upon, as I spy them shifting in the distance.

Horatio.

The reply is not so easy as might appear on the surface. Take me for instance; my name is Italian derived from old Latin, my home is in Denmark, my culture is German, I speak English like a native, they say, and now I am a permanent sojourner of the Magic Isle. So you see I live an

interrogation, I hardly know myself what I am, or whence or whither. Very doubtful I look to you now, perchance just a philosophic doubt, who has come to doubt his own doubt.

Young Prospero.

I see that you have studied philosophy to some purpose at the German University of Wittenberg, home of the age's dubitation; that may be deemed your pivotal category.

Horatio.

So let it stand for the present without dispute; my friend Hamlet, the champion doubter of the universe, often twits me on my philosophy. But back to your point: the representatives of many human sorts are installed in these edifices—especially the European man, both from the South and the North, of the Teutonic and the Latin stocks. In fact, the two great cultures of Europe, the Mediterranean and the Transalpine—the one the older and the other the newer; the one more the acquired, the other more the native—both are here, and split Shakespearopolis into two quite equal halves, as regards its inhabitants, its spirit, and even its organization. Each household often divides on the same lines—the Latin set, high-toned, foreign-bred, aristocratic; then the Anglo-Saxon

set, home-bred and home-spun. Yonder peeps what is known as the Midsummer Fairy Palace; go through it and you will find these two extremes, not to speak of the elfish guild, though all the diverse parts are harmonized into an exquisite little temple of the Muse. Then take my own residence, the spacious Hamlet Palace—what a blending of the two epochal civilizations of our continent, the Northern and the Southern, stamped upon the speech, the style, even upon the names of the inmates, which are Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Teutonic! In fact, the same dualism often runs through the one individual, interfusing in his character. Again sample me if you will: am I a Norseman or a Latin or some new compound of both? My doubting friends often shift the problem, querying whether I am a philosopher or a poet or both or neither.

Young Prospero.

Give me some more of that dish; you, the philosopher, now philosophize yourself and therein top out your own character to oneness, though otherwise so dual. Is nobody else here but you two sets from Roma and Teutonia?

Horatio.

Your interrogatory opens up a new line of human division, yea of intense conflict, namely of

race. Anything of that in Shakespearopolis? Hardly could it be kept out if the maker is re-making man in his social life with all his limits and collisions.

Young Prospero.

Give some instances; that problem interests me especially as it has already arisen in Atlantis.

Horatio.

Indeed! Well our city here contains a variety of Celts—some Scotch and Irish; but more numerous we have the Welsh represented, who were the Master's neighbors at Stratford. I think too I have noticed in him a gleam of the old border feud between Saxon and Celt. Racial color is not lacking among our citizens, nor the prejudice springing from it; two Africans I know well; one a horrible monster, the other a noble heroic character, who under his Italian name Othello is the most famous man of his continent, in spite of Sesostris and the old Egyptian worthies with their Sphinxes and Pyramids. Still it was not Africa but Shakespeare who built his massive frame and personality, and put him forever into the grandest Venetian Palazzo ever reared which you will soon see not merely in Venice but in Shakespearopolis.

Young Prospero.

Him and his fate I would like to witness, since numbers of his dusky countrymen have been already ferried across the ocean to us for some hidden purpose of destiny. I cannot myself fathom what lurks in the dark fact.

Horatio.

Some say that Caliban was a black who, before your father came, was properly sole ruler of this Magic Isle, born here though begotten in African Argier of God knows whom. You may still meet him in the paternal mansion of Prospero on the heights of our city, and associate with him on even terms, for by right of birth he too was once a sovereign, as well as yourself.

Young Prospero.

What! I on an equality with a darkey! You do not know the Atlantids. I can take Caliban with me only as my colored waiter.

Horatio.

Very well; time will have to settle that question for you—I cannot. In the future let us not forget the past; so I would call your attention next to the old Romans who have come to stay and who dwell

in their own splendid temples perched conspicuously along yonder hillock in the somewhat gloomy bailiwick of tragedy. In the same vicinity you may note a massive Greek Parthenon, filled with Homeric heroes still making big speeches and fighting little battles over Troy town—Achilles, Hector, fair Helen, the lover Troilus with his faithless Cressid. You can observe even from here that their Parthenon, like the Athenian, is a ruin as if it too had been exploded by a bomb.

Young Prospero.

An old Greek temple in Shakespearopolis, and Homer too! Then those huge Roman structures magnificent as Rome herself! Verily the World's History in person is domiciled here for a while to get a new poetic picture taken. Do not fail to introduce me there—I must go backward to the start in order to go forward to the goal. The city already disciplines me to be Cosmopolitan.

Horatio.

Past and present you will meet, you being yourself the future. Old and young, both sexes, all stations, prince and peasant, yea the Time-Spirit itself you will face on this spot. The soul of humanity gets incarnate in these individuals; aye, the Superman you may hear, even vision him if

you have the eye; to cap all in an anti-climax the sub-human is figured in this Magic Isle under its own shape which speaks and you have already listened to a little scrap of its message.

Young Prospero.

Yes, I shall not forget so soon. But tell me, can I ever compass this cosmical city? How shall I go about it?

Horatio.

You are already on the way, you have taken the first step, you must ask the question before you can ever get the answer. I confess that I have not the key to the last treasure of this city, still it can be reached—have faith. I myself am on the way now to find it; when I came across you down yonder on the sylvan rim of this Magic Isle, I was in hunt of it—soon I shall know what I have gotten, and you of course will have the chance of seeing the result. But I tarry too long.

Young Prospero.

Wait, I am not ready to let you off yet. A new curiosity has been rising within me for some minutes back, prompting this question: what are those other phantoms which I glimpse in certain parts of your city, fleeting here vanishing there—shapes

strange, not altogether human, with a kind of bodiless body. Just before us in this pretty Midsummer Dream Palace, I note two different sorts of personages—those apparently real like yourself, those apparently unreal yet spooking about in their own airy forms, now visible, now invisible.

Horatio.

You strike a new matter which I have thought of mentioning though difficult and quite intangible. Still I shall try to give you some conception. There are two worlds in this Magic Isle, the Upper and the Lower—the one often called the supernatural, the other the natural—the former being made up of ghosts, fairies, witches, and similar appearances, the latter of ordinary human beings after our pattern. But the difficulty is that both kinds of folk are phantoms, souls, ideas, incorporeal schemes; two eidolons they disport themselves, human and extra-human, intermingling and determining each other in various ways.

Young Prospero.

What a play fantastical! two cities here, one above the other, peopled of two different worlds or perchance planets and both ideal! The thought cracks my skull to get inside.

Horatio.

Hard at first, but if you go on you will make the round. Once more take me: I am a phantom, but quite a real one, more real in myself now than if in the flesh. Young Hamlet too is a ghost, but his father is the ghost of a ghost, appearing to ghosts. And let me here make a confession: that ghost of Hamlet's father troubles me yet, quite as when I first saw it striding the castle's platform at Elsinore. It even scared me though a soldier who has waged the bloody tilt of war; but worse still, I as a philosopher ought not to see ghosts, yet they dart up crossing my path when I least expect them, and take captive my imagination before my reason can put up a fight. The fact is I have to live in a haunted house, just that spacious Danish Palace; indeed all Shakespearopolis may be said to be spectre-ridden just through this Upper World. The Prince twits me on my ghost-seeing philosophy, yet I cannot philosophize the fact down. But if I try to speak Latin to the apparition, it will not answer me and be laid, but stalks off and starts to talking English with young Hamlet, superb English for a Dane who never was in England. And so it upsets me all around, as a scholar, a soldier, and a philosopher—that damned ghost of Hamlet; for this expletive is not blank

swearing, since the spectre by its own confession has proclaimed itself as damned to Hell-fire for its crimes, and I often repeat the damnation of it on my own account.

Young Prospero.

You make me shiver. I wonder how I can stand the shock of meeting with all these spooks. But first let me know how large is your spectral population?

Horatio.

It is considerable, if you reckon all its diverse shapes. Still I can give no exact numerical count; and what makes the reckoning more uncertain, this supernatural element sometimes manifests itself in the natural man and not in its own form. Still this Upper World is not peopled here so densely as the Lower. Then there are some mansions that have no spectral occupants at all; others confine such a member of their household to one room or perchance one corner; thus the Roman Palace of Julius Caesar has only a single rather small apparition, though the whole house is invisibly sibilant with a supernatural whispering from doorstep to garret. Our Hamlet Mansion gives up one large apartment, indeed quite the entire reception-room to its ghostly visitant.

Young Prospero.

Point me out, if you will, the chief abodes ruled by these denizens of the Upper World in your city.

Horatio.

That I can do without much difficulty. As I have often experienced, there are three mansions in which these supernatural beings possess a peculiar prominence and authority—we may well call them the dominating powers of each house's economy. These are the happy-making Dream Palace already mentioned, with its Fairies; then the tragic Witch Palace yonder with its so-called Weird Sisters; finally the Spirit Palace with its Ariel and his spectral band. This last is the home of your famous father, whose name you bear and whose chief designation of sovereignty is that of Magician or Spirit-Compeller.

Young Prospero.

And such is my inheritance in this city! I wonder if I can ever take possession. But tell me who is the creator of this unearthly Upper World?

Horatio.

The same Genius who created our earthly Lower World. Or rather he re-created what had already

been given him by his folk—the realm of fairies, spirits, witches, even deities; just as we men, being given him once as the creatures of Nature, have been re-created by him and settled here in the manifold edifices of his one great metropolis. Thus our architect has built around us a double world, hinting perchance the Here and the Beyond, or the twofold character of our humanity, the sensed and the supersensible. From this angle you may see that our city is a huge man, possibly the Superman with his cosmical dualism into the seen and the unseen, or real and ideal. And I may add that the poet has to remake the made mythical world over into his own.

Young Prospero.

That is about as much philosophy as I can carry at one load. But I would like to know something more of that high structure of my father which you described as perched above all the other palaces and habitations of the city, and as it were overlooking them in a kind of grand retrospect—

Horatio.

And of grander prospect. But how can I explain that transcendent Spirit-temple without philosophizing? In building it the poet is himself the philosopher incarnate or made sensible; Ariel

the aerial and his airy folk are the instruments of the ruler Prospero in bringing forth all the events of this Magic Isle, and hence of erecting this entire city. And I hold that Prospero by means of Ariel is the right creator, aye the very father of the thousand people of Shakespearopolis who are therefore your brothers and sisters, and whom as your next of kin you ought to get acquainted with and to love.

Young Prospero.

What say you! in my veins courses the blood of all your villanous men and all your Satanic women! And do you expect me to associate with the blackamoors of your conglomerate burg? See me going down to yon gore-smeared palace of Andronicus with its eight murders, even if it be of imperial Rome, and there saluting that African Aaron not only as my equal but as my own brother, and then fondling, perchance kissing his bastard negro baby, monstrous fruit of adultery with a white queen. I shall hurry back to Atlantis at once rather than stand such an orgy of dishonor.

Horatio.

Well, call yourself of my race or my brother if it pleases you better. I foresee that you have much self-knowledge to acquire ere you are done with

our Houses of Tragedy; plainly your sympathies are now under training to transcend many a limit. Fearful visitations of fate you will witness and overcome through recognizing them in the providential order.

Young Prospero.

Yes, I grant that I must hold out or lose my whole inheritance, not even seeing my parent. But more deeply drives my ambition which you have roused: I must catch the lineaments of that Dark Lady, the uncharactered character and the secret propelling power of the Master's Genius in its mightiest works.

Horatio.

But look! who is that air-bodied shape? None other than Ariel himself fleeting hitherward in a new guise, for he has the power of taking every form under Heaven. But I must be gone, I am not on good terms with him. We had a quarrel once when I as philosopher said he did not exist to his very face. Though I philosophized him out of existence and proclaimed he had no business to be at all, still here he turns up again.

Young Prospero.

I do not see him in the direction of your look. Point him out to me.

Horatio.

You will hear him soon, ensconce yourself beside this little bush; he will tell on himself, for he is gifted with self-knowledge, and will not fail to impart somewhat of his gift to you. Also some new people, probably visitors, seem to be approaching in the distance for his guidance through these parts. You too may be able to enroll yourself among them and obtain his interpretation which is of another sort compared with mine, and moves in a different realm. Sit down on this moss and wait; I shall see you again, but good-bye now.

SCENE FOURTH.

The third entrance to the city is built above the others and cannot be reached from below, but from the highest parapet. The welkin over it takes many cloud-shapes glinted through with sunshine. Winged figures fantastic toss spheres as if playing with worlds or at world-making, then suddenly vanish. This is known as the Overgate which opens the way to Prospero's temple, and which Ariel now approaches returning from his errand to Prospero's son.

Ariel (to himself).

Here is the spot where Prospero bade me wait
 When he dismissed me but an hour since;
 This entrance has a look familiar,
 Methinks I once did help construct it
 When I was held as the monarch's slave
 Years ago when he first arrived here.
 I have circled the city's wall in my flight
 And stand before this uppermost passage
 Known as Prospero's Portal or the Overgate
 To many-charactered Shakespearopolis.
 Its arch hangs down from above sky-blent
 And its lifting pillars soar up in a flight;
 Hither the way cannot be won afoot

Only he who can fly may enter this passage
 Borne by the wing-stroke of Phantasy:
 But here comes Prospero on his staff supported
 Caressing his Book of magical script.

Prospero (appears).

Thou, Ariel, hast returned from the ploughing
 ship
 To which I bade thee flit over the waters
 As the spirit conductor to my son
 Who might be meandering pathless hitherward
 On the swaying sea-line from Atlantis.
 Hast thou found him and brought him along?
 I see him not.

Ariel.

I delayed you too long at our happy meeting.
 Already arrived he had in our Isle
 The vessel danced moored far out on the waves,
 I winged to it with one flap of my pinions,
 But he already had rowed alone to the shore.
 The sailors, fearing to land on the Magic Isle,
 Had refused to lift him a paddle in succor,
 And I could not help spending a minute of fun
 In scaring those spook-ridden mariners
 Till they all ran screaming down into the hold
 A mingled mass of prayer and profanity.
 For I suddenly flashed a meteor

And rumbled and rocked like an earthquake,
Then strode the deck a rhinoceros fire-breathing,
Whereat I lightly skipped off into nothingness.

Prospero.

Very well for your fantastic drollery
With which you as a spirit divert me;
But what has become of my boy, my boy?

Ariel.

He had found another guide, Horatio,
Who was better than I for his training,
For just that youthful moment's message;
And so I left him listening to Hamlet,
With a sympathy tuned from first deep experience.

Prospero.

Let him stay for a time under such guidance;
Horatio I know is seeking the turn
Which will unravel Hamlet's last mystery,
And lead him the way mediative
That he be able to meet fate's mortal stroke
With his soul's remedial counterstroke
Undoing the poison of his being's malady.
But didst thou not overhear in thy spirit's mask
My son's thoughts and read too his mind?

Ariel.

I heard his desire to know this city
 And to rise to his father's lofty abode;
 But chiefly his heart was printed with Claribel,
 Whose name throbbed with love on his quivering
 lips;
 Her to win appeared the goal of his journey,
 Though Horatio failed not to say him her story
 At which the tear-drops told on his sorrow.

Prospero.

Let him stay in his school for the present,
 Much he is learning of man and of woman
 His life-long acquaintances fated to be.
 But thee, my Ariel, now I am to promote,
 Since thou hast fervently asked for new service;
 The conductor of souls I appoint thee,
 As thou wert here present at their conception
 By the high artificer of this city
 Whose chief instrument thou wert allotted to be
 Through thy gift of quick flight far-reaching
 In response to his vision creative;
 Thou knowest them well and their quality,
 Their right intermediary thou art by nature,
 And so I empower thee with a new office,
 To guide future throngs sight-seeing our city.

Ariel.

Have you, O master, forgotten my prayer?
 I would be human that I may love,
 Aye as mortal accepting my share of death
 That I partake of man's passionate being;
 At the risk of sinning and its fierce judgment
 I would be humanized into a lover,
 So urgent beats my philanthropy.
 Halve me, sex me, make me even a Caliban
 Chained to a brutish body transgressive
 That I may love, sin, and repent
 Fighting mine own human way up to Heaven.

Prospero.

Such a task cannot be laid on my Magic,
 Thou must free thyself in thine own evolution
 Ere I can put seal to thy freedom.
 But now I shall mark thy discipline's course:
 Be thou the guide to these souls of our city,
 As thou art one of their number thyself;
 Speak thou their voice to all our visitors
 Making thyself the soul of their souls,
 For thou sharest the Psyche ever pervasive,
 And art in thine own the round of its being
 Which is the poet's essence and mine and this
 people's,
 Yea even of God it is the deep doing

Whose evangel now thou art to proclaim.
 So thee I induct to a new office:
 The Psychagogue of Shakespearopolis.

Ariel.

The title sounds me already desperate
 As one of your fathomless magical runes
 Which spell the hid lore of your Book.
 But tell me the start of my new vocation.

Prospero.

Pass the span of this nebulous Overgate,
 And thou shalt face the first glint of the sunrise
 Smiling thee forward upon thy young path.
 Hark! all outsiders hither are pushing
 Over each hemispherical curve of the globe;
 And methinks I sight some strangers approaching
 Out of the azured distance: Ha! here they troop!
 Now to thy office, my dear Psychagogue;
 But I must away to my temple above
 Where I foresee my Book will soon be fulfilling
 Many a page of its magical writ.

SCENE FIFTH.

(After the departure of Prospero, Ariel has his first experience in his new office.)

The Psychagogue (to himself).

High Prospero has bidden me hitherward
To a new approval of my faculty
Upon this citizenry of pure souls
Whose homes are those translucent mansions yonder.

Long years have run since first I served him here
Within the magic precinct of this Isle;
Having escaped through him the hell of Sycorax
I then became his spirit servitor,
But when my bonded time had sped away
He turned me over to my liberty
From whose outlawry I have now come back,
Fleeing the jail of mine own anarchy
Into the freedom of my ordered self,
Which is to serve this instituted world
And thus be winning every day my worth.
Here stands a wanderer prying his way,
I shall now shape myself before his eye,
Since multitudinous forms I can assume;
Shakespeare himself sometimes I shall take on,

Even voicing his Genius at highest tide,
 Then falling to my psychagogic task
 As cicerone for these visitors.

Pilgrim (steps up).

Friend, you appear a native of this place;
 I from afar have made my pilgrimage,
 Tell me the lore which wreathes around this shrine,
 Which in me holy adoration stirs.

Psychagogue.

List, then, the lesson first to be impressed:
 Here dwells a spirit folk which never died,
 Nor passed by way of man's mortality
 Into the realm of disembodied souls,
 From which at times they say the form returns.
 But if men here may die, they vanish not,
 They stay forever dying, never dead,
 For death is now a show, unreal, undone,
 With his own mortal evanescence sealed.
 Hamlet, though he be slain a thousand times,
 Comes back and lives anew his riddling life
 Which can be seen by you, the visitors,
 Viewing the staged world of Shakespearopolis.

Young Prospero.

Methinks I witness in this ghostly town
 The very self of immortality.
 But tell me more of how it was ever built.

Psychagogue.

This city was created at first hand
By its artificer poetical
Pouring his shapes eternal through his pen
And building too their edifices fair
Until they make a populated world,
Which hangs adown from yon Acropolis.
Ghostly they seem, but are the realest
Of all humanity yet born on earth;
The true Immortals of the race are lodged
Within the mansions round this builded summit
With personality enduring gifted.
I speak my office like old Mercury,
The interlinking messenger who heralds
You who are due as hostages to death
And those who never die though men they be
In re-enacting every human lot.
Ye mortal visitors, I introduce
You living still to your immortal selves,
The rarest counterparts of your own souls
With whom you ought to get acquainted now,
A city peopled with essential man.
Make friends with these Shakespearopolitans,
A populace unique upon this globe,
Appropriate it all into yourselves,
Then is my psychagogic function filled.

.

Pandora.

You have to me forecast what deepest lies
 Within my will to reach my being's goal,
 Which shall include the wealth of all this Isle
 And e'en the might creative of its maker.

Psychagogue.

Then let me take your spirit by the hand
 And lead the Ariel winged of yourself,
 Whom I do recognize with kinship's glance,
 Through this transparency of palaces
 Built of the solid sheen of fantasy,
 And through this multitude of all-souled folk
 Which undisguises man's disguised self
 Whose darkest secret tells just what it is.
 But you will have to let your Caliban
 Whom you must know as your sensed life's own
 twin,
 Sleep silently within his den of clay
 Lest he becloud the city with revolt
 Refusing it the high supremacy
 And guiling you of all your journey's worth.

Scholarch.

But Caliban too is a spirit here,
 As well as the bright-pinioned Ariel,

Although they be of essence opposite;
 Such is the schooling which I hither bring.
 Of both these people I have duly read
 As vassals in the realm of Prospero,
 Denatured shapes they flitted through my brain,
 And left me well bedeviled with confusion,
 Since for them I could find no precedent
 In Fauns and Hamadryads mythical,
 Though I pored over all antiquity
 To see those creatures twain described as fact,
 And in the poet's book of characters
 I could not dig their right exemplars up.

Pandora.

And never thought of taking a sly peep
 Into that honest looking-glass of yours
 In which you might see both mirrored to life.
 But bring us now, thou valiant Psychagogue,
 Into the maker's soul of all these souls;
 Descend with us down to the bottom last
 Where his creative workshop germs in night.

Psychagogue.

Hear, then, the prelude to his character:
 Shakespeare is double, there are two of him;
 The one is down below in London there,
 The money-maker and the business man,

Director of theatrical affairs,
 The thrifty purchaser of properties,
 And so he waxed in wealth and craved a title
 Tricked with the sign of pompous heraldry;
 A jolly reveler in wit and wine
 He held the throne of frolic sovereignty
 Whose temple was the redolent Mermaid Inn
 Fumed with the incense from the offerings
 Of drink poured out a hundred fragrant flagons
 Down singing throats to tickle up the Muse,
 Who flung her brightest gems in tipsy mood
 And rollicked out in wassail sweetest notes
 Mellowing all to tender comradery.
 "Enough of this for once," would Shakespeare
 shout,
 "This eve I have to tread the boards with Dick
 The incarnation of my many souls,
 And give him hints to make the inner outer."
 For Shakespeare was an actor too, not great;
 He sunk too much within to be outside,
 But left to Burbage all the outward sheen
 Of movement, voice, with play of mien and eye.

Pilgrim.

Dear Mercury of this new Olympian world,
 Tell us about the upper Shakespeare now
 As architect of this his city own.

He never could amid the Mermaid's brawl
Have built or even planned these palaces
Whose art bespeaks him at his deepest self
In solitary grandeur of his thought.

Psychagogue.

The inner actor of all men he rose
Transcendent, he could creep into their souls,
But not so well into their masks of flesh,
Could make the very person talk and act
Pushing down through his goose-quill into ink.
And he could mould a consciousness new-born
So that it rounded full its whole career
From its first worded germ to the capping deed;
His vision lay within the Light of light,
His day dawned of the Sun of all the suns
Which you see strown through yonder starlit dome
Tapping creation new of man and woman.

Pandora.

Leave her not out of your Creator's work,
In which she still must play the part of Eve
Mothering all mankind in soul and body,
Yet with the age's new maternity;
Time's last discovery will be the mother,
And man has yet to find that God is woman.

Scholarch.

That runs beyond all my transmitted lore,
 And in defiance of Time's sanctioned wont
 Tends to dethrone authority divine
 Which always has crowned sovereign the male,
 E'en here in womaned Shakespearopolis.

Pandora.

Whose maker is the father and the mother,
 And doth create each sex with equal love.

Pilgrim.

This seems a ghostly resurrected world
 And to myself I turn a phantom too.

Psychagogue.

A risen folk I cite who have not died
 Though some have feigned their death upon the
 stage,
 But in the mortal act stay still alive;
 They cannot slay themselves, stab as they may,
 And I confess myself a spectre too.

Pilgrim.

But shall we not behold the architect—
 The man himself whose structures we perceive?
 He too must be a soul among these souls,
 The character of all his characters.

Psychagogue.

That question stirs my thankfulness,
 It tells the very purpose of my task:
 To make you see the soul's artificer
 In the artificer's own soul inscribed;
 His many works are just one work at last,
 Three dozen plays a single play,
 Of which his life is the right argument.
 The poet is himself his poem true
 His deepest song his own biography.
 The round of life he makes in what he writes
 Be it his tragedy or comedy,
 Or both in one—a tragi-comedy—
 For his right drama is all three as one
 Cycling the circumstance entire of life.

Pandora.

The woman fain would know her seal of fate
 With which the maker brands all womanhood.

Psychagogue.

The body not alone is stamped with sex,
 To him the soul is also sexual,
 And wears such superscription as its lot.
 The living universe is sexed all through,
 His plays are sexed and likewise are his words,
 Else would there be no love, no love of love

Which revels in its written ecstasy
 And gives the dearest theme to lettered art
 Whose acme is our Shakespearopolis.
 The woman-soul is set the center here
 In love, in hate, and then in hate's atonement.

Scholarch.

Quote me the words in which I may read that,
 I can do nought without the letter's text.

Psychagogue.

If you go with us you can hear him all—
 Him both the one and the other Shakespeare too.
 But the other Shakespeare is my light and love,
 The maker of this lofty polity,
 Creator of these individuals,
 And builder of them in societies,
 Which you will see each in its separate home,
 Yet all at last form one community
 Whose whole you must conceive as well as parts
 That you yourself be helped to manhood whole.

Young Prospero.

But tell me this, thou teacher integral,
 How can I unify this varied realm
 And make it over into mine and me?

Such crown of worth is what I fain would pluck,
 And carry with me to Atlantis far
 That I not merely know this world created
 But can myself it re-create anew.

Psychagogue.

Then listen to my doctrine's final word:
 This city is the builder's deepest Self
 Thrown out into these fair appearances;
 It is the very process of his soul
 Where we commune with it in its last depth.
 Mark well! this structure is a soul
 Which stamps its pattern on each single part,
 And shows its movement psychical in all
 Which I the Psychagogue, am to reveal,
 And thus deserve my calling and my name.

Scholarch.

Tell what edition do you use for that?
 And I would like to jot the page and line.
 Then give us why your generosity
 Upheaves so mountainous an overture?
 Due hints you now have said about yourself,
 But I would know the dated history,
 The facts exact concerning this famed author,
 The days of birth and death and times of things,
 The truth of which to trace I hither travel.

Psychagogue.

Time counts but little in my airy flight
 When I can zone the globe in one brief thought.
 But come, we squander Sol's good gift in talk,
 Let us drop down our speculative height
 And rest our ideal eyes on solid fact,
 Whose bravest spectacle you next shall view.
 Shakespeare has built a Venice of his own
 And filled it with his magic palaces
 That they appear but one Palazzo grand
 Peopling them all with spirits of his brain
 Till that Venetian world seems but a spell,
 The enchanted mirage imaging his soul.

Young Prospero.

Can we not see that magic Venice first
 Holding its mirror up to Italy,
 To Italy the beautiful in gala-dress?

Psychagogue.

You have forestalled my plan in your right wish.
 Here is the grand Palazzo just at hand,
 Enter and swim its panoramic stream
 From its first fount down to its happy close;
 You are at top of luck, for you will see
 The architect himself mid his own task
 And hear him tell about his handiwork

Conceived at sight of its Venetian home.
 Here on the Campanile let us stand
 And watch the living trilogy unroll.

Young Prospero.

Is it illusion or the thing itself?
 Are we in view of Venice by the Sea,
 Or dreaming of your rainbowed Shakespearopolis?

Pandora.

I wonder if in trance I am, or love;
 I cannot rightly say whose I am I.

Book Second

The Venetian Trilogy

ARGUMENT

The action passes to Venice which the poet has taken as the scene of one of his best comedies, "The Merchant of Venice," and of one of his greatest tragedies, "Othello, the Moor of Venice." To these two Ariel has added a third, a tragi-comedy or mediated play, "Cymbeline," whose scene is partly in Italy and partly in Britain, but whose deepest purport is found to be the complement and fulfilment of the other two, thus constituting the Venetian Trilogy of Shakespearopolis. Moreover each of these dramas centers in a female character, though they all have been named after male characters. So the bold Psychagogue, our Ariel, seeking ever to stress the poet's passionate life, has dared to re-name all three from their leading women. But here he comes to speak in his own person.

Prologue (spoken by Ariel).

Now I as the soul-borne Psychagogue,
 The herald of this city indwelt of souls,
 Home of breath-bodied personalities,
 Shall lead you first to the triple pageant
 Named the Master's Venetian Trilogy,
 Attuned to the pomp and splendor of Venice
 Where it plays loftily staged to all time.
 Ye who have hitherward come to behold it,
 From the East and West and whencesoever,
 I exhort you to look with your mind's eye,
 And not be tricked by magnificent jugglery
 Betraying your reason to shows of sense:
 You have to glimpse through their shadow the
 soul
 Indwelling the beautiful body.

Before you will pass as a spectacle
 Three fame-wreathed women immortal,
 The bright Damsel and the dark and the blessed,
 Triple crown of Venetian Shakespearopolis.
 Each of them is herself in person,
 Yet they all will at last be witnessed
 Forming together one loftier round
 Supereminent of character
 Above each individual.
 Three Shakespearian spirits of women

Enskied in all the glory of Venice
But endowed with the self's own daring potency
Link to one full cycle of womanhood,
Portia, Desdemona, Imogen,
A Trilogy telling of feminine fate,
All diverse yet intergrown to a oneness
Which likens afar the Creator's own soul.
Watch ye then, the three women transcendent
Rise and transfuse of their own higher selves
To the one mightier personality
Over each of them singly and sole,
All conjoined in the poet's Olympian household
As the super-woman colossal,
Who rules the farthest flight of his Genius
And is the semblance herself of his life's completion.

Next turn outward your glances
And pour them on yonder triple edifice,
The visioned Venetian phantasmagory
Which uprears out of the layered lagoons,
And reposes in lit iridescence of marble
Along the isles of the Adriatic.
Here dwell the three wonderful women
In their triune temple of splendor
Built by the high artificer's magic
As the Trilogy architectonic,
To be the worthy abode of their action
Preluding the grandeurs of Shakespearopolis.

What a procession of sunbeams dances around us
On the kissing air and over the laughing sea,
Mid a tumultuous frolic of rainbows!
The whole world is a festival daily
And man turns the reveler mottled
In the thronged masquerade of palaces,
Which winds in tortuous sweeps along the canals
Ever admiring itself in its watery mirror.

But mark again the ways of the women three
And peer down into their hearts!
There you will find another Trilogy
Most compelling and deepest of their sex,
The driving-wheel of their destiny
Which whelms them first to be themselves
In their own right of human primacy—
It is their Trilogy bonded of Love
Installed in these lofty palaces,
And building them ever to life anew.
For each palace is a lover at last
So is Venice, all Italy, all England,
Aye, a lover is Shakespearopolis
From foundation up to its loftiest tower;
The elemental passion of woman
Is its throb supreme and governance
Leaping forth of a sudden unheralded;
She knows not why or whence or for what,
But finds her being engulfed in a look,

Driven to choose her sex's counterpart
By a hidden energy hurled resistless
From the first sources of being.
Thus hymns in the heart of the Damozels three
Primal Love as the overture
Which attunes their career heroic,
And bears them on to its destined close,
Happy or hapless or hap-transcending.
For there comes the fiery test of Love,
With its more fiery protest
Against the parent who seeks to command it;
So it befalls that each of the Damozels three
Has her first fight with her father's will,
In defence of her heart's fond choice.
All are protagonists loyal of Love,
Shakespeare is their vindicator,
Himself the very lover of Love
In building this Shakespearopolis.
Yet each of the passioning women three
Has her own character several stamped
Upon their one-souled Trilogy,
Making their inmost heartbeat the stage
On which is played to many a varying throb
Their triple-fated action
With trinity of poetic forms—
Comedy, Tragedy, aye Tragi-Comedy—
Which interwind into one great argument
Reflecting the round of the poet's own soul-world

In the shapes of the grand Damozels
Who play the pandrama of Shakespearopolis.
But let us note the Muse's architect,
As he scans the outside appearance
Of the magical city uprisen.
The poet himself is now present,
Who is to rebuild his loved Venice forever
Into his gorgeous palatial Trilogy,
That it stand unworn of nibbling Time
Which pitiless crumbles proud marble of grandeur.
Not on a sudden does he construct it,
But through all his days runs his labor,
From youth's downpour of merriment
To age's meditative wisdom,
Reflecting the rounded sweep of his years
As his total spirit unfolds in his work;
Thus he builds the whole course of his life
Into his triple poetical structure
Mirroring the full revolution
Of his Genius entire in its achievement,
That we behold shaped into this Trilogy
His life's cycle in one image's whirl,
Forecast of his total Shakespearopolis.
Thus it arrives that the high-throned Damozels three
Envisage to us not only themselves,
But the entire city of which they are part,
And yet more deeply, the inner movement
Revealing the poet's own landing-places

As he lived and wrought out his destiny
In a clasp with the ordered world of his era.
But just behold! he steps forth in person
Having journeyed from London to Venice
That he witness Italy's wealth and wonder
Lit in his deep-set poetical eyes,
And commune in spirit with her renaissance,
As she rises new-born from her storied past
Re-enacting her antique glory.

Pandora.

Let me become all your three grand Ladies,
The bright and the dark and the blessed,
And live full their lives in mine own
Transfigured to writ.

Young Prospero.

I would marry all three of your high Damozels,
The bright and the dark and the blessed,
And bear them away to my home in Atlantis
To build them a newer Prosperopolis
Could their three loves but melt into harmony.

Pandora.

Shame on you! a polygamous household!
Without just the one, hundreds and hundreds are
none.

Ariel.

Peace! Watch the wise of the Master.

The Venetian Trilogy

PORTIA

(Location is at Venice on the Piazza San Marco over which are moving throngs of people representing all nations and races. Ships are going and coming through the waters of the harbor. Gondolas are silently gliding in and out the canals of the city; a number of vessels at the quay are getting ready to depart for Belmont, Portia's residence some miles distant. At the crossing appear two English tourists in the act of entering a gondola.)

SCENE FIRST.

Shakespeare.

Here you are at last my Lord; I have been waiting for you, while a little freak of melancholy has been trying to amuse me during your absence.

Falconbridge.

I hope to take its place and plow your clouded countenance into a laugh with my humors. I was caught in the crowd around the Doge's Palace, and

could not ask my way out through ignorance of the language, till finally I saw the Campanile pointing down to our trysting-place.

Shakespeare.

We are not in England, my Lord; here even the street beggars have learnt to talk Italian. And what a large school of them amid this palatial exuberance! Poverty-pied pomp!

Falconbridge.

There you are again with your gloomy hypochondria in the gayest spot of all earth's gayeties.

Shakespeare.

What a strain of transitoriness, of downright mortality streams through all this colossal magnificence! The very gorgeousness of the spectacle flashes into mine eyes the sumptuous but waning glories of the setting sun; this rainbow world of churches, palaces, splendid edifices seems to span Heaven's dome a moment and then to fleet into iridescent ruins. Venice lies now a mighty many-tinted sea-shell cast upon this shore, whose living creative part is passing away. Wonderful is her art, making the sublimest picture of evanescence at present visible upon our globe.

Falconbridge.

Well, here is our gondola chafing the wharf; let us hop in and be off for Belmont, where to-day is to take place the choice of the caskets, on which depends the winning of the beautiful Venetian heiress, Portia. The device has been published throughout the world and I have come all the way from England to dare fortune, as I have already told you in confidence.

Shakespeare.

And I am here to see and to live the story of it which haunts me with its foreboding significance.

Falconbridge.

The competition is multitudinous for the hand of the millionaire's daughter who is also a queen of talents in her own right. Behold this mustering of the sea-ships of all peoples, each under its own flag. I mark the pennons of the cities of Italy, of the provinces of Germany along with the banners of Spain, France, Morocco, Arabia. Just look at Europe, Africa and Asia pushing hither to the contest—not only the Christian, but the Moham-medan, if I may judge by yonder crescent ensign. It is the world's lottery for the possession of the rich young lady who seems Venice herself to-day.

Shakespeare.

Can you tell me which is the goal—the girl or the gold? From my brief inspection of Venice, I find it has two main centers, Belmont and the Rialto, that is, love and the ducats. This army of suitors is on hand to capture both at one scoop. What say you, my Lord?

Falconbridge.

Is there any other business which can bring so many young nobles and gentlemen to this tournament? But tell me what are you doing here, who seem to be outside of to-day's grand enterprise?

Shakespeare.

Let me confess to you that I also am conducting a campaign in these parts; I have come hither to win as mine own the fair Portia and her Belmont, and even the Rialto and its money-changers; moreover I hope to carry them all off to England forever. Still I may be able to give you help, so you need not feel the least jealousy toward me on account of my suit for the heiress.

Falconbridge.

I shall need your assistance, and that too in the most intimate matter. I have heard you talk-

ing Italian, which tongue I do not understand; my only speech is English which is spurned by every ear outside our island. Portia, though learned in languages, has no knowledge of mine, as I have heard upon inquiry. Then I am not versed in the intricacies of these Southern love-affairs, such as I have seen played upon the stage. Only one Italian word I can say by heart, that is *amore*, and you have taught me that.

Shakespeare.

Perhaps you can dig up enough Latin for present use, as you have been at the University. Portia as well as most of the educated women of Italy can make love like a Roman maiden of the olden time; doubtless she has read all Horace, and could rival Cicero's eloquence in matters of the heart. So dust off your old horn-book and sail in.

Falconbridge.

Alas, when at Oxford I never looked at a Latin print, and I forgot even what I had learned at the grammar-school. In athletic sport and the student's carouse I became very erudite, so that I was graduated before my graduation. Then I made a holocaust of all my unknown classical knowledge, thinking that I had finished my course. But behold! here for the first time comes up the

use of that old rigmarole of declension and conjugation, and I must wive through a Latin dictionary. Is there no other way to wedlock?

Shakespeare.

Try your French which is much spoken in Italy, being a sister tongue, and is not yet wholly forgotten among your fellow nobility of Norman blood. Besides, you have been in Paris where the ear-drum is played upon by the ever-flowing chit-chat of elegant damsels, and soon catches the echo.

Falconbridge.

Worse and worse—the horrid nasals of England’s chief enemy! My ancestors fought at Crecy and Agincourt; see my coat of arms which blazons their bravery. I shall not soil my tongue with one French word.

Shakespeare.

Doubtless you have good reason. No Latin, Italian, or French for you, only our insular English, which is quite tabooed in this cultured South. But I prophesy it to rise the language of the future; I have a secret ambition to make Portia talk it as well I do even if she despises it now; I shall yet bring Portia to love and to wed in English.

Falconbridge.

That seems to be my chance, only I want you to do it right off. The case presses to-day; then why such postponement?

Shakespeare.

I have myself to get ready, my visit just now is to that end. Still, as the matter stands, I may prop you a little. I can at least jabber my imperfect Italian for your cause; I took lessons in it of Signor Florio at London, a Waldensian refugee, whose phrase-book and dictionary I have brought along and carry in my breast pocket for handy reference. But if Portia should break into Latin at the pinch of the crisis, I might be overwhelmed in the grandiose rush of those ancient love-words. Still I take comfort that I read at the Stratford Grammar School Roman Ovid who is Cupid's own romancer, and I can anyhow fling one of his hottest amatory hexameters at her head in case of an emergency. Such a verse has a peculiar insinuating charm when it rings out in the antique measure.

Falconbridge.

Accursed be that old tower of Babel whence sprang all this damnable hodgepodge of tongues.

At any rate I shall try for the right casket, though my heart begins to bump in a shudder at the prospect.

Shakespeare.

Let me drop another warning: beware of that English spleen for which we are branded throughout the Continent, spleen in dress, speech and conduct. Portia, in accord with her training, her nationality, her time, and her name, is classic in her taste; I dare say she affects and probably loves white sculpturesque simplicity which is now having a great revival here in the South. I am afraid she will mock your pied costume—your French hose, your Italian doublet, your Teutonic cap. Then your mood is as variegated as your livery, so do your best to simulate a little antique serenity which is the time's fashion, and which cannot fail to be your happy corrective. I have already found these Venetian women to be natural mockers, and their favorite merriment is to mimick the awkward Northerners like ourselves, who pour over the Alps down into this Italian world to polish off somewhat our native boorishness. Nothing has taken hold of me more strongly here than this contrast between the North and the South of our Europe; it has struck into me for good, and grows a division of my very brain-work.

Falconbridge.

Quite a dissertation on the old while the new presses us to action. Let us get at the job.

Shakespeare.

I have good cause to repeat my admonition: one smack of that English spleen will distaste the broth. I know it, I have a relish of it in myself.

Falconbridge.

I recognize it, you are displaying a sample of it now. But what draws my eye is this grand festival of gondolas amid which our little craft is rocking responsive to the wavelets. And each prow cuts the ripples toward Belmont. I would like to know who are the chief actors in this moving ampitheater of vessels?

Shakespeare.

I shall ask our gondolier, who is usually the Venetian grab-bag of news. I would wager that in him we can tap all the gossip of the city, and of its intrigues, especially in the matter of love. I notice, too, that he can talk high Italian and is not confined to the popular dialect of the lagoons, which I do not understand. So I can play your dragoman.

Gondolier (hums).

O Vinegia, O Vinegia
Chi non ti vede, non ti pregia.

Shakespeare.

He is sunk in the spell of his city's fascination and croons dreamily her charm, but I shall wake him up and propound your question.

Falconbridge.

What prominent vessel is that driving past us so rapidly—most gaily rigged and silken-sailed methinks, decked in flamboyant pennons flapping at us a haughty supremacy?

Gondolier.

That is the Doge's grand gondola of state which promenades through the canals all the high dignitaries from abroad. Now it is conveying the Prince of Morocco, the dusky soldier of Africa, over the traject to Belmont that he may try his luck at gaming for the wedding-ring of Portia. A brave fighter, but a braver braggart—he claims he slew the Persian Sophy and won three victories over the Sultan Solyman and thus to have humbled all the Orient of the false Prophet. See him fondle his crescent scimeter, by which he

swears to his own exploits! Still he condescends to make one apology here in Venice, that is for his tawny skin.

Falconbridge.

So an African is to compete with me for the choicest woman of Venice or perchance of Europe! I can catch the chestnut gloss of his rippling face from here! Heavens! What if he wins the prize—and over me?

Gondolier.

Portia has the name of being very tactful and she can take care of him after her own disguise. She must obey her father's will as to the caskets, yet she is going to have her own way. That is the woman's highest art: to submit dutifully to her master, and still to be the master of her master.

Falconbridge.

What! do I not see another obfuscate visage yonder glancing toward his tan companion? Does Africa furnish all the great visitors of Venice? Why am I not there in that boat?

Shakespeare.

I glimpse him—a fine fascinating figure quite overtopping in grandeur of look and stature the

Moroccan Prince and also the Doge; he is already my hero of them all.

Gondolier.

That is a Venetian general as you see by his uniform, on a furlough from the war in the East where he has gained the highest honor. Indeed, I should call him the most important man in Venice today, standing as he does right on the wavering battle-line between our city and the on-surgng Turk, or between Christian Europe and Mohammedan Asia.

Shakespeare.

Who is it? I would like to know his name; of such a character in such a crisis I long to take a lasting impress. I feel my spirit to rise toward him in a personal appropriation. What an heroic mold! Noblest yet gentlest in bearing military!

Gondolier.

That is Othello, best soldier of Venice who has risen from the humblest rank to the highest, over-leaping the barrier of race, the most inveterate obstacle in our city. And still the social line is drawn against him, despite great merit and greater service.

Falconbridge.

Is he, too, going to Belmont to try the lottery of the caskets and perhaps to carry off Portia? What a startling mixture of tribes, nations, races in this courtship of the millionaire's daughter? All the birth-ranks and skin-tints of the world seem trooping hither in this fleet of gondolas! I have a mind to turn around.

Shakespeare.

No, we must hold out now; let no true Englishman show his back to this new warfare. Besides, I have to see more of Othello, I must take up his presence visible, and seal it upon my imagination; I have my deepest need of him, he has captured me already. I would make him the most noted African that ever lived. Then I must also look on Portia and witness the choice of the caskets, for she appears to me as the grand prize of the age which all peoples are running hither to pick up and appropriate. She means to my thought this question: who is to be the successor of Venice in the world's inheritance, not merely who is to be the winner of her father's estate. Then I interrogate the whole phenomenon more darkly: Is the Venetian heirship to fall to our England? So, my high-blooded comrade, dare to

be the forerunner of your country in winning Portia.

Falconbridge.

I have only the vaguest notion of what you are dreaming about, and my fancy has no flight in that direction. I do not take to your blackamoor as my rival in love. Tell this to the gondolier, and interpret me his answer.

Gondolier.

I can put you to rest on that point. Othello is not going to Belmont to woo fortune in the beautiful shape of Portia. He has already wooed and won. Underbreath gossip is humming all through Venice that he has captured the heart of a noble Venetian girl—much younger and less suntanned than he—so that he does not need to submit his fate to the whim of Portia's caskets. Why then does he go? Doubtless as a companion to the Prince of Morocco, who is his cousin, both being of kinship in the same royal African House, which has long been confederate with our city.

Shakespeare.

That fact whispers much to me in regard to the weird shimmer of evanishment which seems to glint over all this gorgeous Venetian glory. Self-

dependent it is no longer, but is upheld by the arms of foreign mercenaries even of a different race. Behold those two dark prophecies yonder talking together, probably of this very matter.

Falconbridge.

Is it possible—such Heaven-defying miscegenation! Black-skin carries off the bluest-veined damsel of Venice! Well, their large vessel has scudded out of range, having perhaps fifty oarsmen to our one. Dear me, dusky Morocco will reach the goal before white England and have the first chance.

Shakespeare.

Turn away from that side and look to this where you can see a smaller but even finer craft curling its wake toward Belmont. Important people on it—a beautiful young lady, verily a Titianesque blonde—but not a darkey in sight. So you, my lord, may be happy once more. I must ask our cicerone of the paddle who they are.

Gondolier.

That is one of our highest aristocrats, I know well his insignia; a grave Senator of weight and wealth. His name is Brabantio; in the prow of the boat sitting alone before her father, holds herself erect the fair young maiden Desdemona amid all the

tippings of the vessel from side to side; near her on a lower bench crouches her high-born suitor, a blue-blooded booby whom her papa has selected, but she has not—she scorns the pedigree of even the famed old Doge Dandolo, of whose blood he is a scion.

Shakespeare.

So she does not choose by the caskets but by the heart straight. She interests me—another case of the maiden obeying love in defiance of the parent's will. But speak me if you can, my gondolier, the very syllables of her lover; I have a secret faith in the sound of a name.

Gondolier.

None other is he than that grandiose Othello whom we have already seen and titled as he looked at us from the ducal ship of State which has just gone by. *Corpo di Dio!* I smell a ruse—a runaway.

Falconbridge.

What is that Italian name? Othello—I catch it up before your translation—and I forefeel the meaning—that great burly African is your fair maid's chosen.

Shakespeare.

How well you begin to understand Italian, by way of the living instinct, I judge, and not through

the dead grammar. But listen again! Our animate guide-book has a new something to say.

Gondolier.

Do not fail to note in contrast to the blonde Desdemona the dark-haired brunette who is snugly ensconced in the stern of the boat, and is toying the red cheeks and the golden locks of a young fellow, her Venetian lover. That's Jessica.

Falconbridge.

Dark she is, I can see her. By our sooty Splay-foot, is she then a negress? And are we now to hear the counterpart of that first story, namely, a white man love-bonded to a black woman? Tell me, where is this volcano going to erupt? And how will these two inter-racial couples be received at Belmont? Shall I have to meet them on terms of equality, perchance in the presence of the caskets? And possibly see Portia herself carried off by an Ethiopian?

Gondolier.

Let your fears be calmed at once: Jessica is a Jewess, daughter of Shylock, a wealthy money-lender of the Rialto. It is true that her lover yonder, little Lorenzo, is a Christian, but easy-going in his faith.

Falconbridge.

Another Venetian surprise! Jew and Christian intermingling here in love and marriage! This city seethes before me as the hottest melting-pot of born distinctions in the whole world! Methinks I must get out of it or become molten myself.

Gondolier.

So the time runs. All these Venetian girls are inclined to break through their parental and even social leading-strings—quite like those already named in our talk—Desdemona, Jessica and Portia too, she who has the woman's finest art of combining sweet submission with sweeter freedom.

Shakespeare.

My kind of heroines.

Falconbridge.

Not mine—I forecast my speedy departure back to my sea-walled England, the tight-rimmed island of one race, one tongue, one habitude, and one sauce with pabulum of roast-beef.

Shakespeare.

Too insular for me, so I have broke through the English straits for Italy, the re-born. See, yon-

der is a Scot in pied plaid, our island is still not one nor its people; I venture, you can have a bout with him over Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth who is ours, or over Bruce of Bannockburn.

Gondolier.

Watch that little blazon on our starboard; it is not of these regions, I never saw it before.

Shakespeare.

Can it be possible! Has he come too, for Portia's suit! the Welch neighbor to my Stratford home! just across the Severn in the mountains of Wales he has his demesne, the heir of the old King Glendower and the foeman of all our border. I as a boy have often marched in the trainband to the frontier which he kept in a scare lest he should make a foray. If he knew I was in this boat we might have a tussle between Saxon and Celt right here in the Venetian lagoon.

Falconbridge.

My curiosity goes out toward the half-veiled young lady in the next gondola with her seeming page and attendants. But hark to the plaintive song from Brabantio's vessel. I would like to know what makes it so sad over the gay festival.

Shakespeare.

That melancholy strain undertones to me the whole brilliancy of the scene. I too would fain catch that poesy; we shall again ask our oracle.

Gondolier.

I know by heart that song, I can hum it too; but now it is chanted by the two gondoliers of Brabantio who are choice gleemen; it is a favorite of Venice which seems to feel in it some hap of its own. It rhymes the story of Ginevra, the bride, who in her finest nuptial dress lay down alone on a couch with a lid over it, which drops suddenly and is caught by a spring-lock, whereby she vanishes mysteriously from the world. After some time she is found lying in the pallor of death amid all her jewels and finery.

Shakespeare.

What a premonitory note! Even the strokes of the oars attune a dirgeful accompaniment, and the very ripples flow funereal from their blades in melancholy duet. The tragedy of Ginevra, you say; how it stirs me as the foreshow of fate! Keep near to that company, my good boatman, I would fain make mine own that song, which bears in it

an appeal which reaches down to my origin, and predestines me to re-enact it in some dread shape.

Falconbridge.

Behold on our larboard a new rival who strives to overtake us if not to butt us aside with a haughty violence.

Gondolier.

I mark his many insignia, he is the German lord who is known here as a center of trouble. His countryman Luther started the great religious schism, and another German invented the new types which also breed dangers. In the morning he is pious or perhaps philosophic; but at midday he is full of fight, will whip the whole world and make it German; in the evening his beer gets the better of him and he droops. Still he knows more than all the rest of these suitors, and as he is evermore the soldier he may try to storm Portia and all Belmont by straight assault. His new religion and his new print have penetrated to Venice, and may assassinate our city yet, unless we assassinate them.

Falconbridge.

Bump! he collides with our English gondola, but he draws off again. Shall we not ram him in turn?

Shakespeare.

Oh no! settle that at another time, we have come for a different purpose. Look! we are approaching the pier of Belmont. Hundreds have already arrived and are promenading the shore. Here we touch the Lido; tie up and leap out. But first tell me, my faithful archivist, who is that handsome fellow just springing to land next to us, with such an air of self-confidence, even of triumph? See him adjust his showy accoutrements as if he were getting ready to pluck the Goddess Victory all to himself by the forelock.

Gondolier.

The spendthrift of Fortune who delights in seeing him squander her gifts, that she may heap him with more. His name is Bassanio, the man of luck in all Venice against a world of competitors. I have known him these seven years, he is something of a soldier but not much; also something of a scholar but able to make his little of learning count for all; a gentleman but forever in debt—he still owes me for a dozen rides, so that I take him no more, he is such bad pay; yet he always wears good clothes and spends money where he can get no credit, borrowing from his friend Antonio, the merchant whose gains he calculates on as if his

own. He now comes back to Belmont in the gay retinue of the Marquis of Montferrat whom he once supplanted in the eyes of Portia, but her father, the old cunning millionaire who was then living, would not listen to the match. But not long afterwards the old man fell sick and on his death-bed, as rumor tells it, being worried over the matter, he concocts the scheme of the caskets and puts it into his last testament, for the purpose of thwarting just such suitors. But I would wager my one remaining soldo that Bassanio is born to win the prize; Portia will tell him in some deft woman's way which is the casket he has to choose, though she is expressly forbidden to do so in the father's will. For she has feminine tact which climbs Heaven's steep to the throne of God's grace; just through obedience she is going to have her own way.

Falconbridge.

Bid the gondolier in Florio's clearest Italian not to leave this spot, as I have deciphered my doom already; I see it written on the facade of Portia's classic villa which flings an ironical smile at me from yonder knoll.

Shakespeare.

Do not lag at the final throw, take your place in the line which streams forward to the time's test-

ing lottery, even if you have to wait your turn. Portia's white-colonnaded mansion at this distance whispers a gentle welcome to you. Success be yours in the grand succession; mine is to loiter around on the outside as a spectator.

Falconbridge (alone).

Here then we enter the foreground of Portia's antique temple. What are these ornaments? Broken statues of Gods, herōes and mortals—there is not a whole leg or arm among them. Torsos they are called, forms struck by lightning in the olden time, and now they represent the fate of Portia's suitors in their attempt to storm her Olympus, of whom I am one. What a gallery of predestination! And that English poet eggs me on to my doom that he may put my picture into his verse and exhibit me to all London. Well, here I step into line for the caskets, but I forefeel me I shall drop out at the last assault.

SCENE SECOND.

Shakespeare (alone).

Unsteady, aye unwilling treads our noble lord
 Amid these statues, vases, sculptured founts
 Which gladden to a smile this classic grove,
 Imparadising all Belmont.
 He takes his place within the thronging line
 Which presses toward the bowered temple
 Where stands the goddess posing for the choice.
 Ha! he shrinks beneath the frown of fate,
 Albion's promise is not his to bear;
 He looks a losing representative.
 I then must take his place, though he be lord,
 For I feel here my budding chance
 To be the greatest Englishman;
 This is my golden opportunity
 Not for the millions of rich Belmont's gold
 But for the high succession of all Italy
 In the most queenly Muse's realm of poesy.
 Look! the lady marks our lording's vesture
 Mottled o'er in a debauch of tints,
 Whereat a plastic ripple streaks her marble face
 With a disdain which damns a downright No.

Portia, methinks, is Venice beautiful
 Into one living person overmade;

To her now all the world in homage comes
As to the sacred shrine of goddess high,
Many bringing themselves as sacrifice
On beauty's bloodless altar at Belmont.
The city's pageantry doth honor her,
The climate also sports her festal glory,
The sea waves frolic to the shore in joy
Flashing a thousand glows along their curls.
Portia is the grand soul palatial
Which builded all these marble edifices
Which rise like Aphrodite from the sea
To celebrate a festival of love
In which the earth and sky take passioned part
And e'en the sheen drops on you kissing hot.
And Portia is this new-born Italy,
The child of antique Rome in art and letters,
Whose gift of form and speech she makes her own;
That is the graft I must appropriate
And carry back to help my highest gift
Grow to its last completion.
Not Portia's body would I win and wealth,
But I would take her soul into mine own,
For I do love her all in poet's way,
And would her marry to my English tune.
Thus shall I make her everlasting too,
Eternal in her youth and in her deed,
And in my city she shall take her place;
Forever she shall play the caskets' choice

And subtly make it hers in spite of chance.
This world I shall transfer into my page
With all its bloom of speech and character;
And aye, its love I chiefly shall inherit,
Passing it through my pen to immortality.
Ah me! this Portia here must vanish soon,
All beautiful Venice seems now drooping down,
I feel their transitory gayety;
Can I not fix them in their primal bloom,
And this Venetian palace and its folk
Wrest from the vicious blows of assassin Time?

But who is gliding yonder silently?
A veiled woman passes whom I see
Guided by a smooth-faced piping page;
I fain would know but dare not yet approach
To pay her my obeisance loyalest;
She seems a deeper nature than this world
Into whose merriment she has dropt down;
Tarry I must for her unfolding,
She looks unripe amid fruits overripe,
Yet shows some deeper trial with herself
Which still awaits the turn of fortune's wheel.

The age runs here adrift which I must anchor,
Not as Love's chooser but the seer above.
What could I do with Portia should I win her,
And drag her down from her high pedestal?

My grand vocation would be lost forever,
Undone my destiny to all future time,
Were I once known as Portia's husband
Doomed but to gild her gold with poesy,
And grace her mansion in fetters diamonded,
The more unfree to do my task God-sent.
Another way I have to woo and wed her
As poet's bride eternally bejeweled
Presiding in his grand Venetian Palace;
Then shall she drop her own Italian,
And turn her honeyed tongue of love to English
Which now she has in lofty scorn tabooed,
As speech uncivilized and insular
Heard only in a little coign of Barbary.
But hark my oath, ye native words of mine,
Ye glorious vocables of my voiced heart,
I shall redeem you from your present servitude,
And make you masters of this spoken Earth
Now and hereafter too, and yet before;
More sovereign shall be my speech enthroned
Than was that Greek of old, though by the Gods
It was once thundered down to mortal men,
And set to measures by the Muse divine.
The universal tongue I feel in mine
Throbbing into its utterance supreme
Which comes to voice the universal man.
Just here at Venice I forecast myself
Of poesy's world-empire the next heir,

Time's own successor to the singer Florentine
 Whose visioned voyage hymns the Future State
 While man's Last Judgment I shall trump just
 here

In words deep-echoing to this human deed.
 Still farther gleams my look of prophecy:
 My England is successor to this Latin world
 Whose speech I shall wed unto mine in love,
 And bring its lofty characters upon my stage.
 The conflict with the Turk is overpast
 Though yet it seesaws on the Fatal Line
 Between the Orient and Occident
 Still murderous in its expiring agony.
 The English ship flanks all this Midland Sea,
 Where lay the cradle of man's infant polity
 Which now is by the age's soul outgrown;
 We sail the Oceanic round of high emprise,
 And belt the earth with wakes of English keels;
 Already we have staked the land as ours
 Which lies in young Atlantis oversea
 Beyond the bounded pillars of old Hercules.

But halt, my wayward dreams, now out of season!
 Behold the choosers turning to their lot,
 Some frowning care, some laughing at the sport,
 Others drop out of line to take their boats
 Having forecast their luck in such a venture,
 And will not try the hazard of the choice.

O look! the first to dare—what I could not—
The lofty lady's august presence there,
Is the dear little maiden whom we saw
Coming hither—what name? Desdemona
Unforgettable—she walks the heroine!
Watch—let her actions tell my listening Muse.

SCENE THIRD.

Portia and Desdemona.

(The two women are brought together during the selection of the caskets at Belmont.)

Portia.

Welcome to Belmont, Signor Brabantio, and your daughter, the gentle Desdemona, who comes, I dare say, to witness my love's trial. Her years prompt my conjecture.

Desdemona.

I may need your example. Here is my good father, Brabantio, whose will I also have to take into account. But tell me first what are those three caskets set up in a triangle of temptation, golden, silvern, leaden, each voicing itself with a flattering inscription?

Portia.

They are the choosers of my husband in accord with the last testament of my father. I call them my three Fates whom I am in some way to fate. That is just my problem to-day over which

I am balancing my thoughts. Am I to rule or to be ruled by my lot?

Desdemona.

This would not be my way of selecting my life's dearest partner. I believe in love forthright and fought out to the end.

Portia.

I observe that your parent serenely smiles at your brave word, but at your brave deed he may yet have to chew wormwood. Say, did you see Bassanio on your way hither? He is reported coming.

Desdemona.

I saw his elegance flash out in a kind of triumph as he sprang from his gondola to the pier, and adjust his fine military trappings for the day's onset.

Portia.

What did you think of him?

Desdemona.

I did not think of him at all, he is not the man to provoke much thought, in me at least. Is he the one you have chosen to choose the right casket?

Portia

Well, here approaches the procession of suitors. What a piebald set of countenances, colors, costumes from all quarters of the earth! Some look anxious, others are laughing as if the whole thing were a joke, several are quarreling for a better place in the line. Two are starting to fight—two strangers mauling and cursing each other in a barbarous gabble which sounds like English. Bailiff, put them under arrest and drive them back to their gondolas or throw them into the guard-house.

Desdemona.

The first man files up to the caskets. Bless me, he is as dark as Othello, and is accompanied by the Doge himself.

Portia.

He is announced as the Prince of Morocco, a royal African warrior who has done great service to our State in the far East. But he has the complexion of the devil, he has been kissed too often and too frequently by the Ethiopian sun for my blanched lips.

Desdemona.

You seem to have some prejudice about complexion, like all Venetians, like my father here.

But has the man not dared death on the battle-line, and seen grand adventures, as well as strange men and lands? Look at his lofty bearing—is he not a hero?

Portia.

To me your words sound full of fate, which I am not going to challenge on my part. I think I shall make the caskets dismiss him.

Desdemona.

How can you do that and not disregard your parent?

Portia.

Something in store for you peeps out of your simplicity. I have found a daughter's way of having my own will while following my father's will. If you have not yet tackled that problem, your turn is bound to come. But listen to the music and song, alluring yet untuning, even warning.

Desdemona.

Bodeful stratagem! But not for me is all that. Oh Jesu, whom do I see over yonder in the Doge's suit talking with the Prince?

Portia.

That is Othello, the greatest general of Venice.

Desdemona.

What! Is he going to try your caskets like the rest of this wooing multitude?

Portia.

He has not announced himself as suitor; but if he should, I would have to turn the worst casket loose upon him for his rejection.

Desdemona.

I see his heroic worth in his visage, whatever may be his color.

Portia.

Marry that blackamoor! not I, though he be the foremost man of Venice. You observe he is not going to try, he keeps aloof from the line and now parts from his fellow African who stands dumbly inspecting the future. But why are yours such anxious looks, such deep heart throbs?

Desdemona.

They express my relief. But how different we are! I defy race.

Portia.

My child, that means death.

Desdemona.

Let it come.

Portia.

My first suitor is at hand. I must look to the caskets.

Desdemona (to herself).

Watch well. My father Brabantio has gone to salute the Doge and is talking with him; I am quite alone. And Othello has dropped to one side; he sees me and approaches under pretext of speaking to one of the suitors. I shall slip around that way to where I can meet him under cover; not far off invites us a friendly gondola.

The Doge.

Why do you look so intently at Morocco's choice, Senator Brabantio? Your features could not be more tense if you were trying the caskets in your own case. You even make me echo faintly the same premonition for our State which your face foreshows.

Brabantio.

It hits me harder than anything I have ever seen in my life, as I scan that tawny visage daring to test the caskets and to look on the wealthiest

and most accomplished daughter of Venice as his bride. The bolt drives through me, I feel my very bowels push from inside out and the world whizzes past, turning itself upside down—where is my daughter? I left her standing yonder a moment ago. I had a dream! Oh where is my daughter? Gone! Desdemona!

SCENE FOURTH.

(On the Campanile with the visitors, overlooking the city and lagoons.)

Young Prospero.

Variegated view of Venice
Lolling on her hundred islands;
And yet not altogether happy!
It feels, methinks, its own fate
Lurking in all this splendor
Which has risen on Time's ceaseless flow
Like an iridescent sea-bubble.

Scholarch.

Yonder is the house of old Manutius
The world's classical printer;
My longing heart bids me secure
One of his editions of Homer.

Psychagogue (steps up).

I have just fled hither from Belmont
With my brain's overflow of great news
Which is driving each tongue in the city.

Pandora.

What is it? Tell it at once, I pray;
I as woman assert my primeval right
Which is that of curiosity.

Psychagogue.

Portia, the ablest, highest, richest woman of Venice
Has been won by white Bassanio the unheroic
Of all her army of suitors;
Desdemona, the little, modest maiden
Has slipped out of her father's eye
And run off with dark Othello the hero.

Pandora.

The bravest deed yet done by any Venetian,
Man or woman, I trow,
For I could not do it myself;
More daring in her to take Othello
Than in Othello to take her!
None of his deeds of war can equal
Her mighty defiance,
Not indeed of the Turk on the border
But of her own world and its order.
To me your grand Portia shrivels down to a dot
Alongside the colossal Desdemona.

Psychagogue.

Alas for the sweet little girl!
Her deed is so great that it destroys her,
She the limit-breaker will at last break
On her own limit of life;
Fated I have to forecast her,
Here in this order of Europe she dies
Through the penalty of her deed.

Young Prospero.

Nor in our Atlantis would she escape,
Where lies the new realm liberated;
O Desdemona, wee body of innocence,
What a long line of trouble hast thou started!
The deepest conflict of History,
The last to be settled upon our planet,
That of race, whose broadest chasm unbridged
Thou hast leaped over at one stride of thy love!

Psychagogue.

Fated she is at this tick of the æon's clock,
And it will take a thousand years to unfate her,
Till the spirit of time may condone her deed.
Future tragedies are hers by the millions
Acted in the bloody reality of History;

But also on the stage will be retold
Her hapless lot by hundreds of Shakespeares
Ere the happy drama be written
Of Desdemona reconciled.

Pandora.

And for me Portia's deed has in it a fate—
The marriage of the talented woman of wealth
With the elegant coxcomb and spendthrift.
I wish I had a chance at him.

Psychagogue.

Presentiments fail me not in her case.

Young Prospero.

And she gives a lesson to my land as well,
A lesson of monition to Atlantis,
Where we have many millionaire's daughters
Who are wooed by the world's Bassanios
Sailing over the seas for booty and beauty;
But our Portias are more daring than this one,
They wait not for the suitors to come to their
 caskets,
But carry their Belmont along with themselves
Across the Ocean for the convenience
Of the penniless choosers high-born.

Pandora.

Hear my foreshow of this day's destiny:
Old Shylock, the Jew, will win the casket,
Not one of them but all of them together,
With Belmont added to the bargain.

Scholarch.

What! dared Shylock be one of the suitors?
And was his presence observed at the choosing?

Pandora.

His lurking hand I can trace to the outcome.
To me he appears the strongest contestant
For Portia's millions.

Psychogogue.

Look! in the distance rocks a gondola
Over the laughter of multitudinous ripples
As if it bore in triumph the winner.
Ha! I descry in it my smiling master
The poet himself with his prize.

SCENE FIFTH.

(The English tourists, having witnessed the affair at Belmont, return to Venice.)

Shakespeare.

Good luck can at least claim from us a vow of gratitude. Here we meet together again with our gospeler the gondolier as we take farewell of Belmont. Methinks I have won Portia and I am taking her back with me, mansion and all.

Falconbridge.

You can have her and Belmont and even Venice in the bargain. I have had enough of the mongrel affair.

Shakespeare.

You have a right to your soreness. But explain to me what was all that hullabaloo about in your part of the line of suitors? From my perch in the distance I could not see exactly the situation, but I marked you nearby in your many-colored habiliments. You seemed to hover about on the edge of the combat, nagging each side till the constables arrived and hustled off the two antagonists.

Falconbridge.

No sooner had we filed up in a row than the Frenchman and the German began to dispute about precedence of positions. I was just behind both of them, and enjoyed the fight more than I did the choosing at the center where Mr. Blackamoor ranked first. They were at the top of their tussle, the balance hung undecided between German beer and French wine when the officers arrived and both were led away under guard. But I was advanced two points on the spot, in fact stepped up next to the darkey; he was already taking his first look over the caskets with side glances at Portia who dressed her face in her most oracular smile. She also bent her eyes on me for a moment and gave a little titter outright in spite of all her classic gravity which you have so bepraised.

Shakespeare.

Did you stay after such a pleasant invitation? Methinks you were the first man to choose your casket and to get the lady's response.

Falconbridge.

It was not yet my turn, the black skin still stood ahead of me, though the situation was not to my taste or to my smell, especially when he got active.

For he drew his scimeter and slashed the Persian Sophy on the air, telling his victories in the far Orient; then he made the Sultan Solymán skip about the room with his fencing so that I had to dodge out of the way; he told his grandiose African stories outfabling the Arabian Tales, his adventures among cannibals, giants and pigmies with two heads. To cap his magniloquent mendacity he chose the golden casket and plucked out a stinking death's-head from whose hollow eye socket he drew a piece of poetry which turned us all to fools who were in pursuit of the millionaire's money. Thereupon I took the hint and vacated my place at once, a dozen others followed me and the line seemed to drop suddenly to pieces. As I vanished in the distance I heard her give her last jibe at the poor devil's complexion.

Shakespeare.

Thus the millionaire's daughter did hold up a mirror before yourselves by her artifice, and at the sight you all took to your heels. I begin now to see through the scheme of that old Italian fox, her rich papa.

Falconbridge.

Enough of these learned women speaking three different tongues to hide their tricks! Give me the simple English girl with one tongue and not too

much of that. But did you stay on your watch till the affair was over?

Shakespeare.

Assuredly; I would have lost the harvest of my journey unless I had witnessed the last inning. And who do you think carried off the heiress? None other than Bassanio whom we saw spring on the shore of Belmont when we arrived, labeled with the prophecy of our Gondolier, whose oracles have the unique gift of turning out true. His strut as he approached the caskets was the most elegant I ever saw, the folds of his cloak and the curl of his mustache would entangle hopelessly any woman's eyes and then her heart strings. So the grand prize of Venice and hence of the world was won by the champion popinjay of the age.

Falconbridge.

I have nothing to do but go home and forget all about Belmont.

Shakespeare.

On the contrary I shall remember it and perchance celebrate it as one of my life's salient experiences. To me Portia is Venice and her choice that of her city. She will not marry a great man who may be her superior, she will queen it through

her mind and money. She made her own law under the masque of the caskets, and ruled in her father's name. She loves disguise much, and yet more the authority behind it. And she still has some work before her.

Falconbridge.

What makes you say that? Did you see anything to indicate such a turn?

Shakespeare.

Only a wee mote of the future. Hardly had Bassanio given to Portia the kiss of success and she in turn had circled his finger with the ring of betrothal, when a messenger came with news which suddenly snuffed out all the sunshine of Belmont. The bridegroom hurried off with a single word of tense parting, and not long after the bride with her maid followed in red-hot haste. The crowd melted away in confused wonder, the last man I saw was old Brabantio, who rushed about crying for his daughter: "Desdemona, Desdemona," but he got no answer, except the chuckling echo of the gondola's splash.

Falconbridge.

Here comes our Gondolier, I venture to predict that he brings the answer. I can read on his face

new-writ chronicles of the whole day's transactions, even if I do not understand Italian.

Shakespeare.

You are learning somewhat. As soon as we are seated, I shall slit his budget of news and let it pour forth the contents—I can see that it is much swollen and he needs immediate surgery.

Gondolier.

Great doings here to-day which will not end with yon setting sun. That is the Doge's ship of State, but melancholy in its bareness; it returns without the Prince of Morocco, who secretly in a private boat slipped away with his ghastly prize. And no Othello towers up over the deck; he too has taken a different way back to the city, having performed his grandest exploit by capturing not merely Belmont but Venice itself, as I deem.

Falconbridge.

Indeed! Your ship of State deserted by its greatest men, both of them Africans! What will become of you now? But I see a new figure in a woman's habit looking out from the deck with a modest peep.

Gondolier.

I have had my eye upon her movements for some time, but cannot quite find out who she is, except that she is a foreign young lady of rank, evidently visiting Belmont in a kind of secrecy. She watched the choosing of the suitors with deep interest; I noted how she shrank back when the Prince of Morocco stepped forward to the caskets. She also followed the actions of Desdemona with a keen glance. All that I could learn from my fellow Gondoliers was that she with a small retinue had come from your country, England, and might be a disguised princess in search of her lover.

Shakespeare.

What a shock of coincidence! I had dimly caught her outline in the distance as I surveyed the scene from my point of outlook. Strange presentiment! She seems to find her place here as well as in her own home. There! her form vanishes out of view, but not her image.

Falconbridge.

Enough of your soliloquizing in good company! Look! yonder mumbles through the wavelets another tristful gondola which we beheld gaily rocking for Belmont some hours gone by.

Gondolier.

It is Brabantio's but without his daughter, Desdemona, who has fledged her maiden wings to another flight. Rumor runs that she dodged through the crowd from her father, usually so watchful, for he had begun to suspect, and she slid into a skiff with Othello, which he had gotten ready by agreement. The last seen of them they were making across the lagoon for a church where the service of the priest had been amply paid for beforehand.

Shakespeare.

I cannot help but reverting to the two most distinguished personages I have seen here to-day—I should dare call them the central spirits of Venice, one a man, the other a woman, Othello and Portia. Compared to them, all the rest of the people dwindle to zeros. Now tell me, auspicious oracle, why could not the grand drama of the day bring them together in wedlock?

Gondolier.

Impossible! Both are too strong and self-sufficient natures for the harmony of marriage. Portia, well aware of her power both of brain and money is going to rule her man in spite of all her

professions of love and obedience, which are indeed just her feminine means of supremacy. She is the disguised lawgiver through and through; I tell you, she made and enforced the law of the caskets under the name of her parent. In fact, report breathes that her favorite study is jurisprudence which she has privately studied in all its subtleties with her kinsman, old Doctor Bellario, Professor at Padua, and first jurisconsult of Italy. She is the best lawyer in Venice, so I heard an experienced advocate declare who as her father's attorney helped her administer her large estate. But she works in secret, she masks her sex that she may attain more completely her end. I believe she delights to burrow in her hidden subtlety for its own sake.

Shakespeare.

Woman's supreme craft! She masks as very Fate in order to overreach it, she disguises the woman of herself to be the more the woman.

Gondolier.

As to Othello, he could see his own case mirrored in that of his relative, the Prince of Morocco, if he should dare the caskets. But apart from the obstacle of race, the great soldier would lose his vocation, if he were wedlocked with Portia, she

would out-general the famous general every time, make him her mansion's splendid prisoner, and manacle him in her golden chains to grace her stately parlors of Belmont. What could the ducal officer, though highest in command military accomplish manœuvring against the millions of the millionaire's daughter wielded by her brainy strategy? No, the Venetian peace soldier and scholarly gentleman of three tongues is her right man.

Shakespeare.

But such a fellow is always in debt and calling for more cash; you have already said he was a spendthrift. Will he not squander his wife's fortune, and then run away from her poverty, probably to capture another heiress?

Gondolier.

There you have probed the nerve of the future to the quick. Portia is open-handed and will deem it a point of her wifely honor to supply her impecunious husband with funds to the limit, which he will at last reach. I hear that Bassanio has already landed his dearest friend, the merchant Antonio, into the clutches of the most rapacious money-lender in Venice; next he will be found there himself, is my prophecy. Portia's handy

cash must be already heavily drawn on, according to whisperings from the Rialto; then her real estate will be stratified with mortgage on mortgage till the bottom is reached, and zero is found. Treasure my forecast: if you ever come back again from your England to our Venice, you will see all this beautiful Belmont in the possession of the Jewish usurer.

Shakespeare.

I must return to see that if nothing else—the work of this day's destiny for Portia, for Venice, and for me.

Falconbridge.

Here we are grazing this city's shore again after my bridal trip without any bride. Great God! look at yonder church and see who are coming out of the door! Another loving pair in black and white!

Gondolier.

Do you not recognize them? Othello and Desdemona—man and wife now—Venice's own espousals not with the Sea, but with Fate—I, the humble Gondolier, forefeel the shuddering outlook.
Corpo di Dio.

Shakespeare.

Now I know I must come back to make the tragedy.

The Venetian Trilogy

DESDEMONA

(Venice, with its lagoons, palaces, churches and bridges, lies in the evening dusk which sinks down over the city. A colossal statuesque figure is seen perched upon the arch of the Bridge of Sighs. The action is supposed to take place several years after the foregoing part of Portia.)

SCENE FIRST.

Melpomene.

I come the fabled Muse of tragic Fate,
 Melpomene, from old Hellenic land,
 Where I inspired the high poetic strain
 Which sang the turns of antique destiny,
 Forecasting in my hoar heroic forms,
 As they sank down to gloom in Hades' halls,
 Of Hellas whole the one grand tragedy,
 Which has already played itself in time,
 And quit its stage of worn-out history
 That westward strides to round the rolling globe.
 So I, Melpomene, the tragic Muse,
 Have flown across the Adriatic's flood

Through many a storm of roaring centuries
That tide between old Rome's world-arching sway
And all this pomp of modern Barbary;
Down upon Venice I have swooped to-day,
The bridal city of the bosomed sea
Bejeweled with our sun-loved Southern clime,
Dear daughter too of this renascent age,
Time's treasury of beauty and of wealth,
I hail thee here just on thy glory's crest,
Fair mermaid stretched along these shining shores
Clasped in the tender arms of thy fond sea-god
With thousand-armed caress mid the lagoons.

But now I have to speak the portioned doom,
Weaving through all thy joys the thread of Fate
Which darkens hence the brightest palaces,
And bodeful glooms amid thy dim canals
Sad with the craped gondola's watery sob.
The merchant shall not my dread stroke escape,
His ventures in the distant seas I wreck,
And the rich heiress is to lose her dower
Though she possess the wealth of all Belmont;
The proud Rialto I shall turn a poorhouse
And make these busy streets the home of beggary.
All Venice must enact my tragic voice,
Which now evokes her fatal heroine,
The high-bred maiden of the city's wealth and
 birth;

Ill-demoned shall her name be known forever
 As Desdemona, saddest daughter mine
 Whose lot I scarcely can endure myself.
 And so on this sad Bridge of Sighs I stay me
 Which seems to stoop and sigh from heart of stone,
 That all the world beholding it above,
 Doth catch its mood and turn compassionate.

But my chief function I have yet to say:
 From this dread pedestal here on this bridge,
 I must incorporate myself anew
 To lofty vision of the English bard,
 Of men the greatest of the greatest kind;
 I, Melpomene, the antique Muse,
 Must now trans-shape me to his Lady dark
 Whom he will take into his soul through love
 To be the Muse of his high Genius
 Creative of the world's new tragedy supreme.

Ariel (enters.)

I too shall perch me on the Bridge of Sighs
 Where I may hear the suspiration deep
 That wells up from the heart of Venice;
 As the low sough of all her waves
 Throbs through the sombre-channeled arteries,
 She feels and wails her coming destiny.
 Hail, Melpomene, who long ago did sing
 The dirge of olden Greece and Rome,

Invisible thou art to other eyes
 Than mine and the poet's.
 Thou hast alighted here to intone renewal
 Of the tragic strain singing over this city.
 I fly from my domain to greet thee
 In spirit of our common vocation.

Melpomene.

But who art thou who dost thus disturb
 My dark communings on this Bridge,
 The scene of many a drama, real and bloody,
 Of this city's fated individuals!
 But now it sighs the city's own fate,
 Which whispered me far on Greek Parnassus
 Where I was slumbering down the ages;
 It waked me up and bade me hitherward
 To tune the mortal note of this whole world
 Called Mediterranean.
 But who thou comest and why?
 So different in shape and the conception
 From my Greek plastic form.

Ariel.

I fleet to thee from another city
 Where I dwell in the Magic Isle,
 City now being builded of one great life
 Which begets a vast population of characters.

That city's name is Shakespearopolis,
Of which I dream to add a new structure,
A grand Palazzo lifted from Venice,
But transplanted now to our ideal polity.

Melpomene.

So you would rival or perchance outdo
All of my classic temples of the word
Which have come down from antique glory.
But not yet have you said who you are.

Ariel.

I am the breath of our builder's Genius,
Not bodied in shape sculpturesque as thou,
A Goddess marbled and pedestaled,
But a spirit working his task, though unseen
By outer mortal sight;
Yet shapes limited and visible I assume
For the time's brief purpose,
Then I return to my form supersensible.
Just now I do the part of the Psychagogue,
Conductor of folk through this soul-filled city
Who flock hither from all the globe;
Of them I left a group for a while
On yonder Campanile high-towered,
Overlooking the architected lagoons.

Melpomene.

But tell me who is that man in strange new costume

Who is walking hitherwards across the Piazza?
At his view methinks I feel myself change,
My outward shape is transmuted,
And my very Self overruns to another,
Turning me inward for a fresh draught of life.

Ariel.

What aileth thee, oh lofty Muse,
Thy shape flashes a bright metamorphosis!
Wonderful spectacle, dropping thy white folds
Which transfuse to robes many-colored!
And thy face of cold alabaster
Breaks up into hot jets of heart-fire,
While thy high stiff body limbers to love's glow:
What means it all?

Melpomene.

Yonder I see my new Olympian master
Ready to whelm his worded thunderbolts through
me.

Thou seest him and knowest his soul,
Thou, Psychagogue, bespeak his plagation
For me, the tragic Muse of mine own tragedy.

Ariel.

He advances to this Bridge sigh-built
To take possession supreme,
William Shakespeare again in Venice,
Whom I saw years since at Belmont
Surveying and noting the choice of Portia.

Melpomene.

I was then not here to see it,
But, perchance, one of my sisters,
Yes Thalia, the Muse of the happy lot,
And of the laugh Parnassian,
Presided over that festive spectacle;
But my successor arrives—I lose myself.

Ariel (to himself).

Only behold the fresh transformation!
She darkens from her bright marble,
And turns into the new woman of Fate
At the presence of the poet,
Whose companion she rises, inspirer too.
I recognize her, the Dark Lady,
Who now takes stand on Melpomene's pedestal,
With flashing eyes of lightning's passion
Subduing all, yet fatal.
And here is the poet, her lover,

Who has transmuted her to his Muse
In place of Melpomene, goddess antique.
I must hasten away to my coming people
Who throng the subtle Shakespearian city,
And who need now my new guidance.
See! he mounts this bridge of Venetian Sighs
Which vaults from palace to prison,
But which he will make span the whole globe
And overarch the full round of mankind.

SCENE SECOND.

Shakespeare (to himself).

Here I look out from the Bridge of Sighs
Viewing this city, the world, myself.
A full decade of years have passed over me
Since I saw palatial Venice before,
When I bloomed in the joyous springtime of life,
And the city looked likewise.
But now it glooms a sombre appearance,
The festal gayety has departed
And in its stead droops a funereal look—
Lies the change in me, or in it, or in both?
Then I witnessed the happy espousals
In Portia's paradisaical home
And over the folk and the sea and the palaces
Rose the strain of pleasure made musical,
While the smile universal
Rippled the face of Dame Venice herself
As the gloried spouse of the Sea
Who had chosen her as his beautiful bride
From among many rivaling suits
Of the cities of Italy.
But melancholy has clouded her now,
Symptom of malady nestling
In this old sunny clime of the Midland Sea.

But I feel also the change in myself:
I am another man, see another world
Within me as well as without;
A new turn of my life has begun,
I can no longer write Comedies,
Wooing the happy-making Thalia as Muse;
My soul is darkened with destiny,
The pall of human existence spreads through me,
I live on the night-side of Time,
My Muse has become a Fury
Whom I can ban only by writ.
I am entangled in the coils of the Gorgon
Though I be driven to love her the more,
Even fondling the hiss of her snake-curly,
While my tongue spits the fire of her words.
Strongest passion of all my days upseethes
For the woman; yet is she a demon,
And the more demonic the stronger my passion,
Till I turn of myself to what she is.
So I come drawn to this dolorous Bridge
Which I never once noted when here before,
Though it existed already as judgment seat
Ever forecasting the fate of Venice.

But who is yonder ascending its arch,
As if keeping step along with me?
A woman night-shrouded—I know her well—
My torturer, my nemesis,

Whom still I love to the very death—
 Say, why hast thou followed me hither
 Whom I thought to escape by flight?
 From London I flew to Venice in stealth
 Away from thee, but here thou art come
 Perching with me in Satanic mockery
 Aloft on this Bridge of Sighs.

The Dark Lady.

Thou canst not be rid of me thus,
 For I am part of thee, yea thy whole now,
 Whom thou hast not the power to disown,
 Nor even the right to curse.
 For now thy Muse I am become
 And speak to thy greatest Self,
 To thy Genius, which scourges thee
 To utterance for thy salvation.
 Bodeful I lurk in this city also
 And with thy spirit tune it concordant
 Till thy work be fulfilled.

Shakespeare.

O fatal Love, thou hast the dreadful gift
 To set this Bridge and with it all Venice
 Throbbing to strokes of thy pain,
 Making it heave deep sobs of despair
 Which dirgefully rise from the heart

Of this city now centered just here in me.
Oh the shock! I shall shiver to fragments
In the earthquake of mine own passion
Which thou hast aroused on this Bridge
By thy presence. My God, what shall I do
To rid me of this frantic spasm
Which threatens to make me tragic
In making mine own tragedy.

The Dark Lady.

Hasten to live in creation thy fate,
And throw it out into writ,
Loading thy death upon a woman,
The ill-omened Desdemona
Whom for thee I shall here incorporate.
Rouse thyself to experience new,
Pass over again to Portia's Belmont,
And meditate its decadence.
Yonder rocks a gondola full ready
With its beak turned up to the quay
Dumbly inviting thy passage.
Go, I shall not fail thee wherever thou art,
I am one with thy time and thy place.

SCENE THIRD.

(*Second visit to Belmont.*)

Shakespeare (to himself).

Glad to have her out of my sight—and still she is with me. Here I come to the landing from which I started for Belmont once before. But no gondolier at hand! Not much business for him now! I look around; what a mood of decay comes over me! Yon dome of St. Mark's pierces not Heaven but Hades, and the Doge's Palace stands muffled in gloom's dread splendor. Am I in Limbo or in Venice or both? Here walks toward me a type of decayed gentility, whose garments show an elegant patchery. Methinks I have seen them before in a newer gloss. What! he steps up to address me.

The Man.

I take you for an Englishman; would you like to have an interpreter and a guide to places of note? I can speak the three tongues, but not English.

Shakespeare.

Do you know Belmont? I am going thither. And could you tell me whether Portia still resides in her palace with her Bassanio?

The Man.

I could give you more information upon that subject than any other guide, more than all the books. And my knowledge is at first hand.

Shakespeare.

Well, here comes the gondolier. Ho! heave to for a passenger. What! that matchless oarsman again with his secretive eye-shot yet ready tongue, whom I found here long since! Away! let him be for me the interpreter of Venice once more.

Gondolier.

Leap in, and be seated. Indeed! The same features I watched years ago when I oared you to Belmont to see Portia's most glorious moment. All is different now. And you are changed much; the same lines but deepened, your eyes have the old color, the old trick of dreamery, but they flash no merriment, rather sadness. Have you lived the life of Venice in these years?

Shakespeare.

And you have not stood still. You twirl not the oars with your former delight, these cushions are worn threadbare, though they still show bright patches, and your whole gondola has grown old in

a grey neglect and decline. But let us cheer up, give us a song.

Gondolier.

We gondoliers sing no more, the burden on our hearts is too heavy.

Shakespeare.

Can you not strike up again that strain of Ginevra which we heard on our way as we rippled through these waters a decade ago? That story with its music has haunted me ever since. It then seemed darkly prophetic, but the prophecy has kept fulfilling itself year by year, and today the fair bejeweled maiden Ginevra with the fatal lid closed over her in all her wedding gala appears a mourning reality. I recollect you said you knew it—attune us to its music.

Gondolier.

No, I cannot, even the thought starts the tears, for I look about me and see dying Ginevra everywhere. But wait! perhaps later I may be mooded to chant a verse of the Desdemona ballad.

Shakespeare.

But how lonely is the trip now compared to that! Then this lagoon was filled with a fleet flapping

many flags, whose vessels from all nations headed for the golden goal, the millionaire's daughter. We could hardly steer through the vast moving shoal of hulks. Now what a solitude hangs over the waters, so heavy and thick that the oar seems to cut it! Then we saw the Doge's caparisoned ship of state with great dignitaries outlooking from its deck; on it stood grandiose the daring campaigner Othello. Soon too we sidled along the aristocratic gondola of Brabantio who was giving his daughter a little outing from which she was never to return to his home. O Desdemona, thou hast become to me the central woman of Venice, and dost usurp my present life and all its tensest energy! Never shall I now rid me of thy fated image till I exorcise its tearful presence through my art! Thou wilt kill me unless I kill thee in my soul's desperate utterance. Already thy history draws its dagger upon me, thy memory becomes my assassination unless I win my rescue by mine own confession in the pictured deed.

Gondolier.

To whom are you talking, strange man, in that strange tongue! Do not hit me in your jousts, keep off—otherwise here lies ready my stiletto. Stop spluttering that barbarous jargon of yours,

which I do not understand, but which I hear hissing and gurgling and writhing through its vocables. Turn back to our soft smooth Italian, calm yourself and me. Already we are approaching the old pier of Belmont, now getting dilapidated. But tell me, what has become of that young English Lord, to whom you seemed the traveling companion and interpreter?

Shakespeare.

Oh yes, Falconbridge. When he found he could not win the millionaire's daughter here in Venice, he set out for home, where he let loose his splenetic well-head upon all Italy, and even upon me for my love of this beautiful land. The last that I saw of him was at Bristol whither I boated down the Avon on pleasure and business with our wandering troupe of actors. As I looked out on the shore towards the West, whom should I find taking ship there for the new Atlantis, except our fortune-wooing nobleman. "Why thither," I asked. "Many millionaires in that part of the world, and they all have daughters with more money than Portia, as the report flies." Then he went on: "And with them I do not have to love in these wretched lingos, Latin, French or Italian, but can talk business in straight homely English, which is also their tongue." Thence he returned with his prize and

made a great display in London while the money lasted. But the tap must have run dry, as I heard on the very day I set out on this new journey, that the lady had begun a suit for divorce, and had her weeds packed up for a return home to her rich papa in far-off Atlantis.

Gondolier.

Indeed! I can match your story with something that took place here shortly after your departure. You recollect gay Bassanio who sprang so light-hearted on the very steps where we are now landing. He too was the moneyless gentleman in pursuit of the millionaire's daughter.

Shakespeare.

And he won her too! Or it may be that she won him by the right manipulation of the caskets. I have at least my suspicion about that whole transaction.

Gondolier.

I have not forgotten our talk as we rowed back from Belmont after the choosing. But now I have in store for you another little surprise over the turn of the story. Do you recall the man who asked to be your guide just before you hailed me for this trip?

Shakespeare.

All the more readily because I seemed to catch some glimmerings of a face I had looked on before.

Gondolier.

That was Bassanio who is now turning his gentlemanly gifts to account in playing cicerone to travelers who visit these parts. He has become a kind of rival of mine, but he still owes me for those former rides.

Shakespeare.

Bassanio, you say? How I would like to hear his story of Belmont and of what has transpired since!

Gondolier.

It is well that you are rid of him; he would not tell you the truth anyhow. He builds a lying fable out of his exploit of which he comes off the triumphant hero. But Portia will tell you another tale from her little apartment alongside the Ghetto.

Shakespeare.

Can you bring me to her presence? Doubtless she can also tell me the right story of Desdemona

whose fate is now thrilling my every heart-string
for utterance.

Gondolier.

Well, here my little gondola has put its nose to
Belmont's pier; give a spring, and be out.

Shakespeare.

Stay here till I return, as I have further use for
your tongue and your craft.

SCENE FOURTH.

Shakespeare (to himself).

Let me sit down on this marble chair here in Portia's paradise as I did a decade since and ponder the situation before me. I then could not help feeling the transitoriness lurking in the brilliant spectacle, as if it foreboded a tragedy coming. What a decline along this shore! Every hour is sunset with approaching night! Where are now the gay suitors waiting in long line from all lands to choose the heiress of Venice? This hedge is uncropped, the walks unstoned, the gardens unweeded, even the flowers hang their heads woe-heavy. The classic residence with its columns in front is mossy, the stones droop apart, and one pillar has actually fallen, even the whole edifice threatens to topple! Here is the room where Portia stood like a queen of the world to whom the nations paid obeisance. Here were arranged the caskets as the dusky Prince of Morocco made his choice. I saw Othello standing near him with eyes flashing as if he saw his own life at stake. Soon he slipped off to his secret casket which he had already won. On this base stood the leaden casket which Bassanio selected; here it is lying broken in pieces over the floor, the lead being of

small value, while the gold and silver have disappeared. So his choice is still to be seen on this spot. I strike with my cane this wall; whoo! whoo! an owl I have wakened out of his nest in the loft, and he stares down at me with big eyes from a beam; he and the bats seem the main occupants.

And not a soul visible! no custode! what can it mean? The desolation oppresses me, I shall flee back to my boat. Wait—I see a man coming from yonder large finely bedizened bark which has just pulled to. He looks about with the air of the master, he examines closely certain relicts as if he would auction them. I note his look, his eyes, yes, his nose; methinks I recognize him—he throws a glance as if appraising me—keen, cunning, yet vengeful for some wrong. I can't help seeing that he casts a gleam of satisfaction as he treads through these ruins. When he looks up at Portia's crumbling mansion, I mark a gloating smile of triumph. He glories in having gotten an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. From a contemptuous survey of my face he turns away, but I shall approach and address him. Are you not Shylock, the money-lender of the Rialto?

Shylock.

Never shall I deny the name which bespeaks my vocation, my race, my religion, and my revenge.

Shakespeare.

I saw you some years ago on the Rialto, where you loaned the ducats to Antonio, the merchant. You failed to catch him, thwarted through the skill of Portia, and you lost your loan in the bargain. Then too you lost your daughter who with her Christian lover escaped here to Belmont which harbored them, and from which Portia sallied forth to the rescue of your victim.

Shylock.

True, but look around, and you may see my vengeance. Portia I have banished from her magnificent residence, and made it a ruin. She plead me to give mercy, but showed me none, and so she has received none. See yon falling balcony where my renegade daughter Jessica looked out upon the night with her lover Lorenzo; note this avenue where they addressed the moon; now can you see its smile?

Shakespeare.

The sight pities me. Can the place not be restored? Thus it is valueless; not money do you get but loss, aye very ruin.

Shylock.

Money never was my end. I had a deeper goal of goals.

Shakespeare.

That would I hear—tell it me.

Shylock.

I would have my bond. At my trial I cried in vain for justice and mine own, but was crushed by the mailed hand of legality. Let this Belmont stay a monument to my wrong which I have righted. Where now is Portia, the disguised Doctor of Laws, who then outlawed me through her law? Where is the Doge who sentenced me, and his Magnificoes? Whither is Venice herself hieing on the road of fate? I tell you I have had my bond which I then called for, through a greater power, through Jahveh, who still avenges his people's wrongs.

Shakespeare.

So you believe yourself to represent God's justice in your act, which has brought back to the wrong-doer the penalty of his conduct.

Shylock.

But tell me, who are you? You say that you were here a number of years ago and observed the magnificent array of suitors, and the time of my humiliation—saw me on the Rialto and my deal-

ing with Antonio. But who are you? I note you are an Englishman by your dress and your accent and by your beefy rotundity and steaky jowl. Your name?

Shakespeare.

I accept your personal compliments in return for my thoughts which were twitting you on your nose and cheek-bones. Also tit-for-tat demands you know my name, as I know yours: I at home am called William Shakespeare, dramatist.

Shylock.

What! Shakespeare the writer of that foul slander on our race which has traveled all the way from London hither, and is played on our stages just now, named *The Merchant of Venice*! And so you come again to blacken us still further.

Shakespeare.

I chronicled what I saw. You must not blame me for yourself when you behold your picture. But I do grant that you have had your bond fulfilled, and on your vengers you have wreaked vengeance. That would I show in my vocation: how *Shylock's* curse has come round to completion.

Shylock.

Go your ways, I shall not be satisfied. But now I must ply back to the city, having seen the habitations of my foes laid waste by Jahveh. Yet I shall give you a brief hint if you would behold my work topped out to a finish. Portia still lives, go and see her now housed in my Ghetto. Antonio still lives, the merchant beggar of the Rialto, the home of splendid mendicancy. Perhaps you can have a chat with him there on the empty seats.

Shakespeare.

Yes, all that I would cram into my swollen wallet of experience. Farewell.

Shylock (to himself).

William Shakespeare, eh! the poet of Shylock! Well, Shylock shall yet catch you in the toils of his retribution for having drawn such a portrait. You shall pass away and so shall I; but as long as your writ survives, my hate of it and of you shall live and work its damnation.

SCENE FIFTH.

(*Second return from Belmont.*)

Shakespeare (to himself).

Across the sparkle of the wavelets I watch the drooping city of the lagoons in an agony of melancholy. To me it seems as if I were present at the Last Judgment of a world which rose in this Midland Sea thousands of years ago, shone forth in marvels of art and polity, and now is sinking in Time's ocean, having traversed its cycle of history. I brood over its successor—who, when, where? Is it to be my England? I feel me to stand here right on the line between what has been and what is coming; foregone and future clash in me, and make me their momentary battle-field. But that which crushes through my heart on this spot is the past, glorious and transitory, overwhelming me with a kind of cosmical pain. Where are my tablets? I must deliver me of its tragedy, else it will make me tragic; I have to put this world-suffering outside into mine art, that I die not the death of mine own characters.

Gondolier.

Wake up from your revery, goodman dreamer; we are approaching the Ghetto not far from which Portia lives in a tenement owned by Shylock.

Shakespeare.

How different this return from Belmont to that former one! All the sails vanished, the argosies gone, only here and there a dirgeful gondola.

Gondolier.

Somewhere not far from this spot we passed Brabantio's proud vessel returning, but lacking Desdemona.

Shakespeare.

I well remember. And from yonder church we caught a glimpse of Othello and his bride slipping out of the door. That was the fatal deed which has been seething in me these so many years. Indeed that was what compelled me to come back to Venice and to behold it anew when both city and myself were in a different mood. How this bright world has sombered, and how the radiant Lady has darkened! But tell me of Portia at present. You as faithful archivist of Venice, must know something of her history.

Gondolier.

Our guild is not so busy in tale-bearing as it once was. With the grand decline have drooped

the Gondolier's song and story, and even his ready tongue. Still the eclipse of Portia has been the common talk of the city and is even gone into legend.

Shakespeare (aside).

I know something about that, and I perhaps had a hand in the matter myself.

Gondolier.

Bassanio, the gentleman spendthrift, rapidly got rid of all Portia's ready cash, paying his old debts and making new ones. Again and again he went to the money-lender and mortgaged all his wife's real property for ducats in hand. You may recollect I foresaw this state of affairs when we crossed to the wooing of Portia. The result was that Shylock sold out the whole estate and took the place of the rich millionaire whose heiress had to vacate Belmont, against which the old Jew seemed to have a special spite as the spot where his runaway daughter was harbored. He refuses to keep it up or to rent it, but lets time make it over to a monument of ruin. All the elegant furniture was sold, jewels and even her wedding dress went into pawn and never came out.

Shakespeare (to himself).

Dear me, where are my notes! I can make out of that tale another tragedy. But how like Venice herself!

Gondolier.

When you are done talking to yourself in strange gibberish, I can tell you something more in good Italian. I may imagine your asking how does she live, since her husband Bassanio is not the man to do a stroke of work. In this very gondola I took her across with a few household effects, barely enough for a new start in life. I heaved to at a broken gangway which we shall soon see.

Shakespeare.

Take a little breath, row more slowly, I would hear your novelette to the close.

Gondolier.

Well, bread and butter did soon become a problem, which could no longer be put off. Fortunately, no third mouth set up its little but urgent cry for help. Now Portia was ever adroit and full of shifts, soon she began her downright wrestle with hunger unaided by Bassanio, who was born hungry and stayed so. You know she was quite a lin-

guist, so she hunted up pupils in French and Latin. Nay, more, she learnt a new tongue, none other than your English which she needed for the purpose of conversing with the many tourists whom your people are now sending hither.

Shakespeare.

What! our insular speech which she once scoffed at! I must hear it from her own lips! Bring me to this new Portia. But first tell me about Bassanio, her choice of lovers—can he not turn his hand to a gondola and perchance become your rival or partner in business?

Gondolier.

I would not have him around. Besides, he still plays the part of gentleman, scholar, and soldier, as he did when he won Portia. The only thing I have seen him undertake was to act as cicerone for strangers, which service he pompously performs. I saw him conduct some sight-seers to Belmont, and the fellow strutted and told the whole story of his wooing on the very spot where it took place. But he did not reveal the cause of the crumbling walls. Did you note that mossy specimen of gentility with old hat brushed up, who offered his services to you at the wharf? That was our Bassanio.

Shakespeare.

I thought I glimpsed a familiar line in his face.
And I noticed his proud stride, and even the aristocratic twirl of his cloak and curl of his mustachio. Nor did the small peacock's feather stuck in his hat-band fail of its duty.

Gondolier.

Do you see this ring? It is Portia's wedding ring which she, when disguised, took from Bassanio at the trial. She had not a copper bajocco to pay me for the transport. She jerked this off her finger and left it in pawn.

Shakespeare.

What will you take for it? That would be a trophy to carry back to England.

Gondolier.

I would not sell it for the world; I'll let her redeem it.

Shakespeare.

Give me then another of your Venetian tales, they are for me the true jewels of this city which

I can reshape and put into a new setting of mine own.

Gondolier.

This trip brings up to my mind the sequel of Jessica's story. You recollect her, the runaway daughter of Shylock, who with her lover, Lorenzo, took her bridal trip to Belmont and was entertained by Portia. She likewise soon spent the money which she had gotten by hook and crook from her papa, and quickly lapsed to poverty. Lorenzo had to turn his hand to earning a few florins, and what do you think he did? He became a kind of public sonneteer, writing poetic love-letters for those who do not know how to write their own. In a corridor of the Doge's Palace you will see him at his desk scribbling away, while expectant maidens and youths hang around. Jessica at home is busy in the same line, filling orders for amatory epistles which express the woman's side of the great question, be it yes or no. Thus the pair are happy in an everlasting paradise, for they renew everyday their first day's love-life with all its tender words and sweet rhymes.

Shakespeare.

How glad am I to find one married couple in Venice who are not tragic! Poor Portia! wretched

Desdemona! High-born women undone of destiny! But little Jessica the Jewess, whose start seemed not very auspicious, has outstripped you all in the conquest of Fate. Well do I recollect how I heard the two lovers at Belmont ten years ago twittering together on a moonlit evening, and carolling their dulcet duets in responsive echoes which attuned their own heart's harmony to the melody of music and the moonbeams! Something of the kind I too had felt and chanted in mine own cloudy England. So I in my art have to re-enact my happiest experiences, and alas! my gloomiest too, that I shun mine own fatal doom.

Gondolier.

I have been waiting for you to wake up from your talking somnolence, in which you labor intensely. Already for some minutes we have come to the landing which fronts the shattered old Palazzo where Portia has her humble tenement up a flight of rickety stairs. Leap to the shore—but hold! I note that the curtain of her window is drawn, she must have gone out to give a lesson. In the distance I discern her little gondola—I recognize it, for it is mine, and I give her the use of it. There! it turns a bend of the canal out of sight—I am afraid we have lost her.

Shakespeare.

Then I shall not hear her later history—another human lot untold to me! Take me to the Rialto again—perhaps I shall find the merchant Antonio haunting his old arch of triumph.

SCENE SIXTH.

(Portia appears in the reception room of the Albergho Inghilterra, a hostelry on the central Piazza of Venice, having been summoned by a group of visitors who are making the tour of all Shakespearopolis, and have now reached the middle portion of the Venetian quarter. Their guide advances and addresses her.)

Psychagogue.

May I dare salute you as Portia of Belmont, not unknown to me at a former time. My company of travelers from abroad seek eagerly to hear your account of Brabantio's daughter, maid of mournful memory, with whom your name and lot have become strangely intertwined.

Portia.

So you wish to learn about the gentle but dread-inspiring Desdemona, whose fate seemed to be a prophesy of Venice itself. I call her the most daring woman this city ever knew, far more defiant than I who simply chose in an unusual way my very usual husband. Next I disguised myself and played the jurisconsult, for I had studied law

with my uncle Bellario at Padua. So I untangled my own little love-knot, took the man I wanted, rescued his friend Antonio from the murderous clutch of the money-lender, after which feat we all came back to Belmont in happy frame of mind.

Psychagogue.

So far I have known already and to my people told the story. But why do you call Desdemona the most daring of all your women here?

Portia.

She defied not only the conventions of her city, but the institutions of human kind.

Young Prospero.

Tell more about that. I thought she was a simple-hearted Venetian maiden who fell in love with a black hero and impulsively married after her passion.

Portia.

Such she was, and that seems and forever remains the grand surprise in her character. Let me tell you the intervening story. Scarcely were we seated at our little wedding feast in Belmont

after the nuptial ceremony was over, when there came a messenger in great haste to my residence, and asked an interview. I was summoned to the Sagittary where Desdemona and Othello were staying. Her brief note bade me come quickly, declaring that she was in extreme straits. I had already heard a rumor of the marriage, which was brought from the city by Bassanio on his return with his friend. As I delight in harmonizing conflicts, I soon got myself ready and set out with the messenger, an officer of Othello's guard. Quickly Bassanio, who had been a soldier, followed. As soon as I arrived I met Desdemona in tearful distress. She at once said: "Dearest Portia, you have solved your problem of love, can you not solve mine? You met with success your father's obstacle, meet that of my father. You won the man of your heart, help me win the man of my heart. Go to my parent and reconcile him to my choice, even if I have chosen without the caskets."

"Who is the favored one?"

"Othello, the Moor, whom you saw when his relative, the Prince of Morocco, made his trial at Belmont." "My dear girl," I replied, "you heard my opinion then when I noticed your agitation as you asked the question: 'Is Othello going to try the caskets?' Next you saw how the dark Moroccan Prince failed." "Yes, but you did not

love him," she answered, "Your heart was on another suitor, as mine is on Othello." Whereat she sobbed, and I spoke firmly: "I repeat I can see in your choice only fate. My Bassanio was of the same rank, city, nation, race with myself. But you run counter to all these deepest instincts of our nature in your preference." "I shall do it," she cried, "My love bids me make the greatest sacrifice for love ever yet made by woman. I shall go where he goes, to the wars, to Cyprus, and stand with him on the battle line between Europe and Asia. I shall be heroic with him and die for him, because I feel my fate, and his too, in my deed. Let it come, I challenge my tragedy."

I answered: "It will be the greatest of its kind."

Pandora.

I acclaim her the heroine supreme of our sex, yea of either sex. She breaks over all these pre-established limits and asserts her freedom. Let family, society, caste, even the state get out of her way, I hail her the one liberated human being now on this globe.

Portia.

Many people in Venice thought I was very bold, but she far transcends me. No, I cannot reconcile

her conflict, I confess myself a weakling beside her. And yet the simple-minded, home-keeping artless girl!

Psychagogue.

Can you intimate to us what produced this prodigious transition in her character? She must have had its possibility in her from the start; still it required some peculiar conjuncture to develop it. 'Tis the deepest, largest soul-change I have ever known in Shakespearopolis. And mightily prophetic of some order far-away in the ages!

Portia.

I have often thought of this matter and tried to fathom its primal source. So I construe it: Othello filled her with his own adventurous, heroic spirit by the stories of his grand exploits—his battles, sieges, fortunes from his boyhood. Then he was superb in spinning his Arabian tales about strange men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders, all tricked out with his African imagination which cannot always divide truth from fiction and has the tendency to push fact into fable. He thus poured his soul into hers, and transformed it; she became obsessed with his daring, she the unsophisticated tender girl, hitherto quite empty of all boldness, but it grew till she actually wished

that Heaven had made her such a man, and so she became such a woman—surely the most courageous enterprising, bound-bursting in our Venice. I admired and trembled! What inspired audacity in her little feminine body!

Pandora.

The prophetess of the future, the herald of the coming harmony of the nations, and of something that lies far deeper—the unity of the races!

Young Prospero.

That outstrips the women of my Atlantis, often reported the most advanced and emancipated in the world. I would not wish her for a wife, I would be left too far behind.

Pandora.

I am not saying that I personally like her, or that I would choose an Othello for a husband. No I would not. But I can distinguish my individual feeling and even prejudice from my belief in what is coming perhaps a thousand years hence. I grant that I am not yet ready to take the Moor as my companion for life, I still prefer one of my own race, even if I may glimpse a different world in the far futurity.

Psychagogue.

But the story is not ended. What became of Desdemona—the tragic outcome which you hint—tell us of that.

Portia.

The end came soon and sadly. The emergency of the time called Othello to Cyprus to defend the island against the Turk. Desdemona would not stay behind; the enterprise, even the danger, made the appeal to her new-born spirit of adventure. Now Othello had to have white officers near him, yet under him; the result was a furious jealousy sprang up from the black against the white, deftly fanned by a cunning villain named Iago. All were caught in the bloody net of fate. Othello murdered his wife, Desdemona, in a fit of jealous frenzy—then he slew himself. Iago was caught and executed. When the news was brought to Venice the parent, old Brabantio, expired of humiliation and grief.

Pandora.

Methinks I would have perished too; I see no escape. It is the tragedy of Venice, aye of Europe, indeed of the whole world today.

Young Prospero.

I hold that these conflicts can all be reconciled by the right person, all of them except one—that of race. Yes, the defied parent, the jealous husband, even the villain can be restored, and the whole action undone; such is now my hope and my prayer—it must be.

Portia.

Here is a thoughtful lady who has as yet said nothing, but who seems most deeply observant of us all. Somehow I cannot keep my eyes away from her face. Did I not see you as young maiden with your attendant at the drawing of the casket? Your look then seemed a forecast.

Imogen.

That was my first visit to Venice when a girl. And I heard also the story of Othello and Desdemona, whose wooing looked then to me as the counterpart to yours. Well do I remember you and your woman's disguise to reach your end; I felt its premonition in mine own case.

Portia.

My task here is now done, I have another lesson to give.

Psychagogue.

Let the visitors stay in this hostelry. I have to pay a visit to the Master who has returned to Venice that he may know of these dark fates which at present feed his Genius. It suits his demonic temper just now, deepened as it has been by the experience of his life to the very bottom of creation's night-side.

SCENE SEVENTH.

Shakespeare (alone on the Bridge of Sighs).

What an unconquerable power in secret
Is haling me back to this arch of sorrow
That I must tell what I see, what I am!
I have just come from that other bridge
Where the world's business once centered,
On the majestic Rialto;
There I met the gray merchant Antonio
More melancholy than ever,
As he sat glooming over the past
When his rich argosies sped through the seas
From Orient old to the Occident new,
While the bare Rialto itself rose a sigh
For the lost grandeur of Venice.
But more deeply I feel in my life's own throb
The fate of the fair Desdemona
So meekly innocent, yet so daringly guilty,
That she drives me to utter herself—and me.
So I am lashed by the scourge of my Genius
To tell her tale in the throes of my speech,
Though I have to suffer all that she suffers
E'en to the point of her last strangulation,
And I have to writhe with maddened Othello
In the Hell-lit torture of all his jealousy,

For I love Desdemona more than her lover,
And in my frenzy of passion
I clutch the dagger to slay her
And then feel the slash of its blade at my gorge.
For I am tragic in writing my tragedy,
The penalty paid by my heroes is mine,
The character I in all my characters,
Even their death I have to pass through in writ,
Or stay with them caught in mortality.

So I here resolve on this Bridge of Sighs
To give utterance to Othello and me
In mightiest words of my trip-hammered tongue
Which smites the strokes of my love's world-pain
Into speech that re-echoes its pangs and its power.
Well do I know it—to write such a book
Leaves its scars on the soul forever.
The dire experience had first to be mine,
A furious war in which I was slayer and slain,
Enduring all the wounds I inflicted,
As I slaughtered my spirit's folk for their deeds
Which I felt to be also mine own.
And now here on this Bridge of Sighs,
This mortal frame of mine is shaken and rent
More than Othello's in telling Othello;
I roar to the scourge of my agony,
And my life's fountain bubbles up sealding tears,
I feel his throes of love the resistless

Which has conquered the conqueror ;
Then the full counterstroke sprung of his jealousy
Smites me till I yield up my wofulest sob,
Him I slay on my page, and so save myself,
As tragic am I as is Othello the doomed,
And I seize the knife to cut mine own throat,
The very haft I must grasp in my hand,
That I kill the Othello within me
But not myself, the scribe of his deed,
And thus I am rid of him as my fate,
Which else remorseless had whelmed me down
Into death's deepest dungeon.

So come to my prayer for rescue,
Thou mightier Genius mine,
And again be my sympathetic releaser
Through the strength of thy word superhuman,
For not the first time now I invoke thee
To help me unclutch the pitiless grip
Which the Dark Lady has clawed in my heart
Through her power demonic of love.
Help me once more, I beseech thee,
And perchance still again I shall need thee
With all the charm of thy soul-easing speech
Till one day I may be freed of my curse,
Rid of the spell of woman the terrible.
E'en in my deepest convulsions of passion
There streams a hope of my rescuer coming,

I pass through all the torturous agonies
Of Love's Inferno down to its darkest pit,
Still for me I dream a rising redeemer,
A woman savior from woman's curse.
But not yet can I be liberated
From the dues of my pain purgatorial
Till I have it syllabled into my scroll.
Hand me my pen—the sight of my tablets
Starts already relief from my woes,
Now I must write with my soul's full gush
The fate of Othello,
Lest I by mine own stroke droop down in blood
As Othello the fated.

The Venetian Trilogy

IMOGEN

(At Venice in the Bibliotheca or Hall of the Past with its urns, statues, and especially manuscripts and books. Out of the window across the square is seen the Cathedral of San Marco, on whose front in a niche stands a figure of the Madonna. The third Muse flits down and speaks.)

SCENE FIRST.

Urania.

Who calls me from my old home on Parnassus
 To this strange land and stranger time
 Far away from my art and my people?
 I, Urania, the star-weeting Muse of the skies
 Am invoked to be present and to preside
 As arbitress over destinies human
 Enacted upon this spot of the earth.
 Man I would move to the spherul harmony
 Which sings through all the stellar spaces,
 But he will not be tuned to such music,

He prefers discord and blood and death,
 So I have witnessed mine own world antique
 Sink down in a sunset to Hades.

Ariel (starts from an alcove).

I, the modern Hermes of the ghost-world,
 Have called up thy spirit out of the Past,
 Bidding thee fleet from Hellas the hoary
 To this new Venice of the lagoons
 In aid of thy sister Melpomene,
 The inspiress of mortal Tragedy,
 Whose fated song has fated herself
 With the very doom of her own art,
 Unless thou come from the spheres above
 Bringing thy starry presence healful
 To rescue her from her own judgment
 Returning upon her.

Urania.

That sister hath greater power than mine;
 Headstrong ever she was and gory-minded,
 Averse and uncanny to me is her character,
 I never could control her in realm of the Muses,
 Though I sought to soften her furious nature
 And to thwart her bloody deed
 In the deeper spirit of placation.
 But she wrought with the trend of the time,

And hence was far stronger than I;
 From that old world the clutch of pitiless Fate
 I could not ward off, though often besought;
 Hellas is gone, Rome has perished,
 And methinks that Venice herself is passing,
 If I dare judge of the now by the past.
 But tell me further of thyself.

Ariel.

I am Ariel the Psychagogue,
 Conductor of souls to the eerie city
 Of spirit-peopled Shakespearopolis.
 I have conjured thee hither as Muse of eld
 To help our time build the new world poetic
 Which is to be heir of thy old one;
 Thou must be embodied afresh with young power,
 For thou couldst not stem the tragical lot
 Of thy life antique, though thou wouldst;
 Thou didst gleam reconciliation from Heaven,
 But it never descended to Earth;
 The twinkle of love fell from thy starlit eyes
 But flashed away into nothingness;
 Remedial thy look, but helpless thy deed;
 Thy name is rightly a prelude celestial
 Which hints from above high prophecy
 Though it has never yet come to fulfilment.
 But now thy season is ripening.

Urania.

Conjurer thou of spirits long since vanished,
 What dost thou purpose with me the time-shent?
 I can do nought in your life here,
 I am not at home in this city of yours,
 Let me flee back to mine ancient abode,
 Among the old Gods and Goddesses Grecian,
 Roaming the dreamy fields Elysian;
 More shadowy seem I here than there,
 Where I haunt with my folk the asphodel meadow.

Ariel.

O Muse of the stellar heights above,
 I dare not loosen the clasp of my spell
 Till I transform thee to another shape and function.
 To-day there comes from distant England—
 Perchance she already is here—
 The woman who is to take thee into herself;
 She will incarnate thee in bright newness
 That she undo the Fates of thy sister,
 The tragic Melpomene,
 And of thy world, and of its famed poets,
 Yea of thee, making thee live and love again
 In the art supreme of the Muses.
 Thou shalt take her shape all shining,
 As thy sister informed the Dark Lady,

The sinister woman of Shakespearopolis,
 Destroying herself and her singer,
 Unless he escape through thy spirit redemptive.
 So thou, renewed in thy calling supreme,
 Shalt be his redeemer and thine and his world's.

Urania.

Of her, the blessed mediatorial woman,
 I have dreamed all my ancients' days,
 Even far back in the dawn of my Homer.
 But too strong was the Goddess, dread Nemesis
 With her vengeful train of the Fates and the
 Furies,
 I wrestled with the Dark Powers
 And sometimes won me a sunny moment,
 But in the end I was defeated and banned,
 When our whole world of beauty antique
 Sank down graveward with the old Gods,
 And turned one vast tragedy's spectacle
 Pageanting all the sweep of the ages,
 Whose wrath I, mild Urania, the soft-voiced Muse
 Could not stay nor placate.

Ariel.

Well do I know thy struggle heroic but doomed;
 I, Time's Psychagogue, both the old and the new,
 Oft watched thee wrestling and writhing

In the souls of the grand-worded bards of eld
Who themselves sought to fight off the sanguined
grip

Which Nemesis clutched in their life and their
writ.

But they could not put down their Dark Lady,
The demonic power slaying their world;
Then didst thou droop, weltering in a grim gory
sea.

Thy little sister Thalia, Muse of the laugh and the
kiss,

Innocent, happy-making, heart-joining,
But alas! not priestess remedial of sin and fate,
Could give thee no help in that last crisis.

So dark Melpomene won, thy tragic sister,
But lost herself and her folk in the winning,
Fated just in her triumph.

Now thou art to take the new stride to the new
time,

Her and her victims 'tis thine to redeem
Or at least to beshine with thy favoring stars.

Urania.

O lay not on me this fresh task of a life!
Another age of suffering wouldst thou inflict
Upon my out-worn spirit and shape?
I shrink from this prospect enkindling anew

The remediless woes of my old world-pain.
 Besides I did enough to be an example
 In that time antique when I ruled as a Goddess
 Alive in the hearts of my people.
 Hast thou forgotten how I saved from the Furies
 Mad Orestes guilty of his mother's blood?
 How I translated old blind Oedipus penitent
 To the Gods out of the clutch of the Fates?
 And did I not send Iphigenia as priestess
 To redeem from savagery barbarous Tauris?
 Leave me to my sweet Elysian repose
 As a dutyless deity once enthroned
 But long since discharged of my rule.

Ariel.

Impossible! I, in my office of Psychagogue
 Summon thee to thy old life's renewal
 In a young shape of this city.

Urania.

Tell me the name of my regenerator
 Who you say is coming hither from Earth's last
 bound,
 From Ultima Thule of nebulous Barbary.

Ariel.

A Princess, daughter of the British King,
 Her name is Imogen, and is titled the Blessed

In her bright palace of Shakespearopolis.
 Now she hither has journeyed solitary—
 In her woman's sufferance sympathetic
 Seeing the lot of Portia and Desdemona,
 Forecasting too the turn of Venice.
 Behold, yonder she comes, then pensively halts!
 She looks sorrow's own monument,
 Yet through all her pangs is writ resolution
 And the spirit's atonement.

Urania.

How tragic the sway of her features!
 Methinks she ought to incorporate
 My sister Melpomene rather than me.
 Still I forefeel the transformation,
 I must fuse me into her dolorous soul
 Its affliction to heal with my starry balm.

Ariel.

Glance along the Piazza at a niche of St. Mark,
 There weeps the Madonna sorrow-laden
 With the woes of all Christendom,
 Which she takes to herself and undoes by her
 healing
 Born of her spirit vicarious.
 She too seems to enter the soul of Imogen
 With a new transfiguration of faith;

Descending from her church's pedestal
 She gleams of the woman the love universal
 Which she irradiates as the Blessed Lady.

Urania.

Hers is a different world from mine,
 And still we have something in common :
 The message remedial.

Ariel.

To this harmony then I have led you,
 But I see mounting the stair the Master,
 The Builder himself of a world full of people,
 One of whom rises to be enthroned
 This new Princess of womanhood.
 Now I am off, my company waits
 On my promised guidance.

Urania (to herself).

How I feel myself happily vanishing,
 Tenderly shifting into the shape and the soul
 Of this new Sovereign Lady the Blessed !
 Long ago I was her dim prophecy
 And of her spirit foretold pregnant oracles
 Which Time, the old midwife, has unwombed
 Into the sunshine of day.

But mark another presence of wonder!
There approaches the word's grand artificer
Voicing the new personality—
Him too I would well imbreathe.

SCENE SECOND.

(Still in the Bibliotheca lies the scene with some old men poring over manuscripts.)

Shakespeare (alone).

Again to Venice I have journeyed,
 Propelled by my heart's deepest longing;
 My third visit it is I recall
 After the years of my dark experience,
 The years most intense of my life in creation,
 During which I passed my Inferno
 And enacted by word mine own tragedy
 Repeated in manifold dread production.
 So I have escaped my damnation
 Through my pen's saving power
 To ban my innermost devil,
 Exorcising him into my fantasy's shapes.
 I had perished long since of my passion's Furies
 Could I not have flung them out of myself
 Into my soul's mirrowing scroll
 Whereby I kept regaining my spirit's freedom.
 One task remains to me still to be done
 Ere I wind up my life's full round:
 I have to image my rescue from fate
 Through my art of building the woman redemptive.

Round me I note this Hall of the Past
With its lettered rolls of old things remembered;
Venice too has become chiefly a memory.
And I myself on this spot feel transmuted
Into a reminiscence of what I have been
In my rising and falling turns of career.
I remind me well of beautiful Portia
The millionaire's heiress of classic Belmont,
Whom I saw in young glow of admiration
On my first visit to Venice the happy,
When I was myself a joyous comedy
Which laughed out of my heart as I wrote.
But the next time I came to this city
Its beauty was gloomed with a lowering pall
Which lay also in me, I felt it well,
As I looked on the deed of bold Desdemona,
A child challenging dreadest fatality,
And I bewailed her lot on the Bridge of Sighs
Where rose up before me mine own shrouded specter
Who had followed my flight to Venice,
And threatened to fling me her victim in the la-
goons.
But I have rid myself of the Dark Damozel,
Who has become my Hell's reminiscence
As I recall her shape and the time of her curse
Just here in the Hall of the Past
Where I shall limn her picture forever
In all her varying turns of character,

For one soul she is though she takes many forms
Which I have scrolled in my tragical women.

But now I hail this third visit to Venice
With the joy of a spirit absolved
From the debt of his journey infernal,
Bearing a new atonement of life.
But with this regenerate selfhood of mine
Dawns a fresh duty not to be shunned,
My Genius bids me on pain of perdition
To forge my soul's trial in characters written
Who will enact the deed of redemption.
But whom shall I take? I know not as yet;
Still I may whisper my heart's deep presentiment,
The new reconciler must be a woman.
The Dark Lady it was who so long undid me
Demonizing my life in her spell
From which the passage of suns allowed me no rest
Till I had touched my despair's last discipline
And found the woman-soul mediatorial
In the sanative balm of my home.
Her then I am to incorporate holily
Imbreathing her with a new personality
Which heals all the ill of her sex.
But where can I meet her eidolon?
Ha, here approaches a shape I already have seen
Dimly flitting before me long since,
She makes sign to address me.

SCENE THIRD.

(The locality is the same as before, but a new figure enters and salutes the poet, telling him of her lot.)

Imogen.

First let me trust you as my compatriot;
I shall confide you my name, rank and travail,
I am Imogen, hapless, Princess of Britain,
Where you too, are at home, the poet.
I come to you with tribulation and sorrow,
And dare address you in my affliction;
There sheds from your spirit something remedial,
And your eye rays sheen of sympathy,
As if you had known the same conflict
Which is now tearing my heart.
On this spot I feel Desdemona's own fate
Which threatens to crush me where she stood;
Well do I remember her courageous gait
As she stepped into the Signory yonder
Before the Doge and all the Magnificoes
Who were sitting in judgment.
Then rose her father, Brabantio venerable,
Pleading against her deed of love;
Every word cut to her heart as he reproached her
With daughterly ingratitude,

And still she daringly clung to her soul's chosen
 As her own last right of existence.
 Alas! that mirrors my own present lot:
 My father, King Cymbeline, I have defied,
 For he has forced me to make the hard option
 Between my parent's love and my lover's love;
 And I have preferred mine own Leonatus,
 Asserting the deepest worth of my womanhood
 Though it rend atwain every pulse-beat of life.
 I would flee to my stolen brothers
 If I but knew where they are hidden,
 Though it were off in the wilds of savagery
 Remote from abodes of civilized dwellers.

Shakespeare.

Thy hap is common to youth and thy sex,
 Every young lady has to pass through this struggle
 As the fiery test of the truth of her love.
 I have shown it a dozen times and more,
 As a favorite theme of my London stage,
 Vindicating the daughter's right in love's decision.
 Do you remember the story of Portia's caskets
 Once enacted here in this Venice?

Imogen.

Unforgettable is the instance!
 As a child I had the dread presentiment

When I was first loving my Leonatus
Against the stern will of my father:
Still we were wedded in secret nuptials.
Then a new and greater trouble assailed me,
Seeking to break the bond of my marriage.
The villain slipped in between me and my husband

Who was banished to Italy by my angry father,
He seeks to shatter by lies our mutual faith,
As Iago did to the valiant Othello
Rousing jealousy of the true wife Desdemona;
So now Iachimo, kindred in name and nature,
Love's Italian Machiavel,
Has set on fire mine own Leonatus
With suspicion furious like Othello's;
My husband will take my life in his madness,
He has sent a secret order to England
That I by my servant be murdered.
Hence I have again wandered to Italy
That I find and redeem my homeless spouse,
Curing him of his hapless delusion,
Restoring our first bond of love now broken.
My journey I have deflected to Venice
Whither the lot of Desdemona has lured me,
For I have the hope to do what she could not,
Overcome the husband's delusive jealousy.
I fain would see where she mistook,
And learn from her fate to unfate myself,

Mending the disrupted tie of family;
 Such I deem my womanhood's first consecration:
 To heal the dearest one of his dread malady
 Which threatens to destroy husband and wife—
 Him and me to slay as children of doom.

Shakespeare.

Noblest conception of duty is thine,
 Fulfill it through suffering, make it thy life,
 Upbuilding thy deed as thy monument grandest!
 O Imogen, I thee prophesy
 Time's true mediatorial character,
 Loftiest woman-soul of my Shakespearopolis.
 And here I shall broach thee my dread confession
 Hitherto hid in the dark of my heart:
 I too have writhed in that same tribulation,
 Smitten by jealousy through all my being;
 What thy Leonatus suffers, have I suffered,
 'Tis a Fury which plunges me too into Hell,
 The demonic counterpart of Love's very self,
 Which thralls me to a terrible woman.
 So I acknowledge to thee my Dark Lady,
 My passion seethes up around her in frenzy
 As she to another doth yield her sweet favor.
 I am burning still in the very flame
 Where I put the tortured Othello,
 And made him shout my mortal agony,

From which therein I found a relief,
Not lasting but ever returning
Till from that first Harpy I may be disthrall'd—
Aye from the Dark Lady herself.
Thy thought, thy presence, thy personality,
O Imogen, thy faithful deed medicinal
Drips me already its healing balm
Into the deepest chasm of my soul,
Whose Stygian horrors I have passed through;
I would have killed myself like Othello
If I had not killed him with my pen point
Letting my tragedy flow out into words,
Which transmuted the drops of my heart into ink,
Thus bleeding me of mine own deadly poison.
But still further I must carry my cure
That I free me of my curse's recurrence,
And need never again pour me out tragical:
Thee I must recreate into myself
And render thee integral with my being,
Till I project thee out of me into the world,
And make thy deed of high mediation
Live anew in my transcript of thee
Which reveals thee as healer divinely redemptive.

Imogen.

High is the calling which you have given me;
But let me remind me of the deeper wrong:

My fair name has been smirched by a villain
 Who has injected his venom into my spouse,
 And I am unjustly suspected
 By the man I have defiantly loved
 Despite every hindrance of rank, blood and malice ;
 Against the villain I cry for the penalty,
 Never from me can he win forgiveness.

Shakespeare.

Yet thy case is happier far than mine,
 For my Dark Lady is to me untrue not only
 But untrue to truth, to virtue itself,
 And plays me, not slyly the villain,
 To blacken my honor's fair name,
 But openly flaunts me her unlove,
 While I am tied to her still with my heart-strings,
 Which she delights to set thrilling love's agony.
 Thy Leonatus has been misled by falsehood,
 But I am not so misled—I know—
 Her confession I have to her own unfaith,
 Not told in tears but in a laugh of scorn
 Which smites me powerless down
 Into the depths of sin's lowest damnation,
 There leaving me still in the clutch of my Fury.
 I tell thee I have often thought of doing
 The double murder of jealous Othello,
 Slaying the loved one then slaying myself ;

Thus the Dark Lady has hung me up in a dream
From homicide swaying to suicide
Turning my soul to a slaughtering maniac
Till thee I began to glimpse from afar,
And felt the fresh breath of Heaven remedial.

Imogen.

You startle me with your contortions—
Tragedian you, not now in the theater,
But on the stage of your life's real drama.
Why those dreadful facial grimaces
Echoing the wrenches of your whole frame-work,
In response to your fiendish torturer,
As if you were racked by the demons?
Let me try to soothe you with eye and hand,
Then send you back to your home at Stratford,
For you need the cure of your family's heart
To tune you back to life's harmony
Through the woman's tender touch of kinship.

Shakespeare.

Thy word and thy look pour me sweet solace,
And betoken recovery lasting.
So cruel was once my love's infliction
That I could not have helped me from death
Unless my guardian Genius had found
An outlet equal to my spirit's agony—

That was my art to turn my pain's burning lava
 Into my uttered volcano of speech,
 And to cleanse my soul of its suffering sin
 Through the words of my lettered Purgatory
 Building my world of self-expiation.
 For years the malady lasted,
 In desperation I would clutch my quill,
 I swear thee, I wrote not for bread
 Nor fame nor gain nor power
 But for my soul's salvation,
 And that is my greatest worth.

Imogen.

Well-a-day! I see now the fountain head
 Which streams forth that line of women of
 horrors—
 Erinyes, Gorgons, Medusas snake-tressed—
 They all bubble out of the love of that Dark Lady
 Whose frantic spell kept you writhing long years
 Told in heart-words of ransomless suffering
 Which would burst up beyond the expressible
 And crack the moulds of our human language
 That it be shivered to fragments.

Shakespeare.

Reproach me not with that rout of female devils
 Who rave through my pages down to damnation,

Quitting me thus of their presence!
 O Imogen I behold thee now in thy place
 As my turning-point to peace and renewal—
 Thee my new node of regeneration
 Bringing my circuit of life to its fullness!
 When I contemplate thee in thy calling
 Those Stygian dames take flight to Erebos,
 And I become whole and one in thy spirit,
 Thou my releaser, restorer, redeemer,
 Whom my Genius bids me at once
 To limn into letters undying
 As the woman-soul mediatorial.

Imogen.

Wait! I too have on my soul a confession:
 For in me still lurks a corner of hate
 Against that villain, hellish Iachimo
 Blasting my husband's love, traducing my honor.

Shakespeare.

That leads up to my harder request;
 A still more difficult task lies before thee
 If thou wilt rise to be mediatrix complete;
 That very villain with all his diabolism
 Seeking to ruin thy shining name,
 And to undermine thy wedlock of love
 Cannot be left out thy sweep of redemption.

Him too by the might of thy spirit's suffering
 Thou art to bring round to repentance
 That he expiate in contrition's own sobs
 His most sinning deed.

Imogen.

What! am I to rescue my damned destroyer!
 The devil whose hate is the love of two hearts!
 He snaked into my chamber and watched my sleep,
 Stealing my keepsakes he boasted his triumph
 Over my woman's consecration to love
 With a fiend's lying mockery—
 The very act of Eden's old Serpent.
 What is Hell made for if not just for him?
 Worse than Iago, his devilish namesake
 Who had some ground for his villainy
 In requiting Othello!
 How can I, weak woman, redeem original Satan
 Bridging the universe's deepest chasm
 With my little hand of redemption!

Shakespeare.

Just therein lies thy ultimate gift remedial
 Which proclaims thy womanly character:
 Canst thou transform the devil incarnate,
 Bringing him to repent, confess, undo his wrong
 To the full round of his sin's expiation?

If he be left out of thy work redemptive,
 Thou canst never be whole, not the integral soul,
 Which has here to enact the all-healing Self.
 If thy very Satan, the villain Iachimo
 Thou dost not redeem and that in a hurry,
 He will come back from his sly lurking devildom
 And get thee the next time surely,
 And me perchance, aye the world.

Imogen.

Reconcile my father whom I honor,
 Rescue my husband whom I love,
 Save you, the poet, from your Dark Lady,
 All that I would and possibly can.
 But the fiend who has wronged me most deeply,
 The Satanic destroyer of all to me dearest—
 I shall not, I cannot, I may not—
 Bid me not again go down to the burning pit,
 Through which I have doubly passed already,
 Bid me not to endure once more crucifixion
 Just for black Beelzebub's sake.

Shakespeare.

Thou must, not only for his sake and mine,
 But to restore thy love's Leonatus forever,
 Else all thy work will have to be done over.
 And I cannot finish my life without thee,

Rounding my cycle of years to completion
 Through my utterance stamped with thy soul.
 Hear my prayer, I must win thee fulfilled
 For mine own last fulfilment.

Imogen.

Let me gather me up to my sorest resolve:
 O Leonatus, love for thee is enforcing me
 To overcome my deepest repugnance,
 And to quit me of my ultimate hate.
 Iachimo penitent I shall forgive
 For thy dear sake, yet also for his,
 And aye for mine own,
 As I too now feel me forgiven.
 With that last chain clanking down broken
 I stand up disthralled, redeemed,
 But ready still for the fresh burden given me.
 Master, what else?

Shakespeare.

Then I too am atoned with thee through thy rise,
 As I trace it in letters upon my leaves
 Having passed my purgatorial trial.
 In thee I hear mine own music remedial,
 As I unfold concordant thy character
 Crowning thee queen of Shakespearopolis.

Imogen.

Enough! let me pass on to my mission.

Shakespeare.

She glides away to some fresh advancement,
 For she deems her labor not as yet done,
 Herself not finished to her fulfilment;
 She cannot rest in what she has won.
 Fare thee well, my Imogen dutiful,
 My gratitude's daughter for my salvation,
 Giving thee life I have wrought out my rescue
 Telling thy tale I have told mine own absolution;
 Now thou art one with the Powers of Heaven.

Voice From Above.

List to the miracle
 Told by my oracle:
 If thou dost hate
 Thou art thy fate.

But now I chime
 A higher rhyme:
 If thou canst hate thine own hate
 Thyself art the fate to thy fate.

Under many names
 The Lord proclaims:
 That ever the hateful
 Doth father the fateful.

Shakespeare (alone).

What means that mystic voice from the cloud
 Which yet speaks to my heart a message
 Of Imogen now the healful restorer?
 I too feel me by her transfigured;
 Six years ago, three years ago, aye one year ago
 I could not have redeemed her in writ,
 I would have made her tragical
 Passing pitiless sentence of death
 Upon herself, her people, and her world
 So damnable in its transgression;
 But now I am become another man,
 And see with a different vision
 The way of my life and with it my art;
 Having whirled round a grand turn of my Genius
 I have won my new personality
 Which stamps my achievement as integral.
 Imogen now can I show atoneful
 Redeeming husband, parent, even her devil,
 Not omitting herself and me, her history's scribe,
 And this new writ of mine is not that of death
 But of death overcome and undeathed
 Through the woman-soul mediatorial.

Epilogue

(The group of visitors, headed by the Psychagogue enter openly into the Hall of the Past, having previously from their nook overheard the conversation between Shakespeare and Imogen. On the other hand the poet, having gone out to see Imogen depart, slips back into an alcove of the Hall of the Past, and overhears in turn the remarks of the visitors.)

Scholarch.

Those last words of the poet sound like the grand finale of our Venetian Trilogy which we have now been living. It seems to be a finishing of himself, and compasses his life's deepest experiences, as well as the stages of his accomplishment.

Young Prospero.

Not very distinct is my impression of the whole, I shall have to grow over night. But what grips me strongest is the oft-repeated gospel of the poet that his writing has been not only his relief but his actual redemption; without his pen he would himself have been as tragic as his own tragedies.

Psychagogue.

But I would call your attention to another message. You have witnessed the great miracle of Venice and of the age, and indeed of the poet. The transformation of the Muse antique into her modern counterpart outreaches the similar fables of the ancient time. It is a vision which you may well take away with you as the chief fruitage of your journey to Shakespearopolis. I, though Psychagogue of the spirits old and new, never before beheld such a wonder.

Pandora.

And I who live back to the hoary Promethean age, felt myself transmuted to Imogen, the poet's latest woman throned here in his city. I would be what she is, and I experienced the same renewal that came over me when I saw and heard Hermione who might be her older sister. Still I have my questionings which cast a shadow over my inner glow.

Psychagogue.

You would not be Pandora with her box of ills, unless you could fling from your tongue one or two of your shadows upon the sunlight which persists in shining nevertheless.

Pandora.

If I usurp your function a little, my dear Psychagogue, do not grow jealous of me, else I may think you have caught the disease from the husbands of those two deeply wronged ladies, Hermione and Imogen. Then I in my turn may have to try upon you my woman's remedial power.

Psychagogue.

You are indeed the all-gifted in accord with your name. But I hope I may not be destined to suffer as much as the poet.

Pandora.

That brings up my first interrogation: if the builder of this city of souls endured such exquisite and repeated torture from his Dark Lady that she drove him to creation, why did he not transform her in person to one of his supreme reconciling women, thus manifesting at one stroke the complete sovereignty of his Genius? Why did he make the great refusal?

Young Prospero.

You speak in a riddle, you seem to have some insight which I cannot catch. I did not hear him refuse anything great.

Psychagogue.

I forecast the meaning, but I need not speak it out, it takes a woman to know a woman, so listen.

Pandora.

You must be aware that in the royal family there was the queen, verily the Dark Lady who sought to destroy her husband King Cymbeline, her step-daughter Imogen, and thus gain the throne of Britain for her imbecile son Cloten. Did you not observe that the poet, when he exhorted his new Muse, who was just the saving mediatrix Imogen, to redeem the man-villain Iachimo, he gave not the dimmest hint to her that she should save the deeper, subtler woman-villain of the household, the royal step-mother, nameless as the Dark Lady herself whom this queen fittingly represented in character. I confess that my mind fell on her as the chief one to be restored, the woman-fiend to be rescued by the woman-saint. But Imogen somehow can only save men, her husband, her father, and even her he-devil, but her own she-devil lies outside of her range of redemption, and seemingly not within that of the poet. Against such partiality of male salvation I as a woman feel inclined to protest. Was not that a great refusal—

a declining to be complete? Can you interpret this strange exception, my far-seeing psychological exegete?

Psychagogue.

The fact cannot be gainsaid, and I have noted it with a peculiar trepidation. For I confess that I trembled when I gazed on that queen step-mother, truly a Fury in look, word and act. She recalled to me my most horrible experience in the past with the godless witch Sycorax, whom I once served, and because I would not do her hellish commands, she pegged into a cloven pine where I howled in agony for a dozen years till Prospero arrived in this Magic Isle and freed me. When I saw that queen's shape and heard her secretly plot torture and even death against Imogen, I shivered in remembered terror, for I again felt the throes of that time of tribulation. So I fled from her presence with a curse.

Pandora.

But you too shall yet have to go back and redeem even Sycorax in order to complete Shakespearopolis and yourself.

Pilgrim.

Tell me, Psychagogue, for I am in search of Shakespeare himself in his most hidden experience,

was the poet really ever under the charm of such a wicked temptress, being fascinated by her Satanism like King Cymbeline? I am loth to believe any such scandalous reports about the private life of our greatest man.

Psychagogue.

You are a student, read his confession about his Dark Lady, which he has left in his poetic diary. You will also find her to be the Fury raging through his mightiest tragedies, and taking many female forms whom he had to expel from his soul through his power of utterance which becomes superhuman in his struggle to drive out his torturing fiend. And hitherto the dark woman has continued to return upon him, forcing him to create her out of himself into a new shape, and thus to ease his heart of her love's torment for a brief interval. But his complete and final deliverance is now hoped for through the appearance of his new Muse of redemption, the mediatrix Imogen whose healing soul he is to embody in writ, which is his way of self-atonement.

Young Prospero.

Let me here interject a new interest, my faithful Psychagogue, which centers in that wretched

moon-calf Cloten, the queen's son, whom the mother tried to marry off to Imogen and to elevate to the kingship. Poor youth, low-bred if high-born, though of unnamed paternity; sensual yet ambitious of rule, beastly yet human in the germ—why not try to evolve him and save him from the fate of nature? I say to Pandora, let the old infernal werewolf of a mother go, but save the boy, if our woman savior Imogen has the power. Cannot the youth's passion for her be transformed into a means for his rescue by our woman-soul redemptive?

Psychagogue.

Ah yes, Cloten, the queen's doomed misborn, at whom I confess myself terrified! For I was fearfully reminded of my own dread days with Caliban, son of Sycorax by unknown father, the rebellious brute yet humanly gifted, who made so much trouble for Prospero and for me, and especially for fair Miranda, whom he would possess after the manner of Cloten.

Young Prospero.

Him I would like to take back with me to Atlantis, if he were alive. I believe we could save him in that new world which is built to raise the human

being upwards from below. How many have I seen who were outcasts here, become men there!

Psychagogue.

I wish you might try. But recollect that Prospero spared Caliban, and trained him here on this Magic Isle. And his development has been surprising! Have you not observed him over yonder in the wood? Still I have to acknowledge that the poet's new mediatress Imogen could not yet rise to mediate the loathly degenerate, Cloten.

Pandora.

Still another interrogation forces itself upon me in this connection, hinting a problem very suggestive to the woman of the future: Will some Imogen ever make untragic the marriage between white Desdemona and black Othello? Hence I looked eagerly to discover the color of her lover Leonatus, and found that he was of the same native stock and race with his bride. So the conflict raised in the Othello tragedy is not solved by this new Muse of the poet, but shoved off to the distant in time and perchance in space. You, young Atlantid, do you think that your land or your world will bring about the solution? I call upon you specially, for you have just declared that you

would rescue Cloten from his fate, who is still white though a beast.

Young Prospero.

The reconciliation with Othello's deed lies beyond Atlantis, which is testy on the question of race. Whatever the prospect be, the fulfilment is not for us, at least not in my day.

Pilgrim.

So it seems that the problem started by little Desdemona with her Othello and flung into time's ocean, reaches in its outcome beyond Venice, beyond Shakespearopolis, aye beyond Atlantis. The mightiest deed of all, done too by a young girl! And the future pilgrim will have to travel to a still newer world, perchance to the other coming ideal city of the greater poet which lies possibly far around in the Antarctic Ocean. I as bodiless spirit will journey again to see such a Magic Isle with its newly populated metropolis. My dear guider of spirits, will you be there to conduct me, performing for us all the same office as here?

Psychagogue.

I shall not fail. As I swallow all space for my repast, so I drink down all time for my wine.

Young Prospero.

But wait! we have not yet captured the whole of Shakespearopolis. Only the triple edifice of the poet's Venice has passed before our vision.

Psychagogue.

You will find this a sample of the whole, when you have penetrated to the inside of it. Indeed, it suggests in its round the Master's entire achievement, and likewise mirrors the total process of his spirit in its fulfilment.

Pandora.

Well, I wish to see the completed city of the supreme architect. Look yonder outside of this Venetian world, and admire the many fair edifices strawn upward to the crown of the citadel. Let us hither haste, at least for a brief inspection.

Psychagogue.

Aspiring woman, I am with you.

Young Prospero.

She leads, and somehow I seem to myself to have fallen in the rear, Atlantid though I be.

Shakespeare (to himself).

In this little alcove penned up with dim shelves
Which are laden with dusty old records
How stifled I feel and restlessly squirm!
Yet here I behold the great Hall of the Past
Whose aisles run back into man's crepuscular
world!

But in my age I belong and turn it to shapes
Which must keep on unfolding with time;
Even my Imogen is not perfected
Though once I saw her my soul's highest triumph;
These visitors I have just heard in their talk
Which comes to me bearing the seal of the future,
And draws me the lines on her work still undone
With its limit stamped in her character.
These people are here, I see, to complete me,
And to develop what I have left in the germ;
So did I with the heroes of Homer,
Achilles, Ulysses and Trojan Hector
Whom I made to talk and to think to-day's Eng-
lish;

So too I transformed the Great Men of Rome
Antony, Cæsar, Coriolanus the mothered,
Nor did I forget to unriddle in Egypt
Love's colossal sphinx, Cleopatra.
All I fetched down from dreamy antiquity

To live present Londoners,
And even to tell of mine own life's moments
In the dared disguise of their history ;
Likewise I built for them bright new mansions
More splendidly gemmed than their old plain
 abodes,
And set them together on a luminous eminence
Which shines through the world from my Shakes-
 pearopolis.
Also regal palaces I have erected
For the Kings of my islanded England
Rim-full of the Nation's high spirit.
But the last of the structures which I upreared
And as a coronal placed on my city's summit
Is the temple of mine own spirit viewing itself,
As backward it spies all the works of its years.
Still it likewise must be rebuilt
Reflecting the order new of the ages,
And its inmates also must be evolved—
Caliban, Ariel, Prospero himself,
Whom I evoked from my brooding spirit
To shadow its ultimate essences pure.
My very last shapes of peopled creation
Are only buds of a higher efflorescence
Perchance to be seen in Atlantis.
Once I stood on the sea-shore at Bristol
And gazed at the prophetic sails of the ships
As they pushed out westward bound for Virginia,

Breaking over our insular limits
To dare the limitless future.
So I felt mine own spirit beating within
To wing itself over all boundaries,
And now I know my Genius aspiring
Even beyond the walls of my Shakespearopolis.
Alack! my work here I feel to be done,
Never again shall I return to Venice,
Beautiful city of beautiful women;
In the Hall of the Past I must leave you forever
Portia, Desdemona, Imogen,
True soul-mates of my life's deepest crises,
Farewell.

The Shakespeariad

Part Third

THE OVERWORLD

OF THE MAGIC ISLE.

ARGUMENT.

The visitors pass out of Venice having witnessed its Trilogy, and hasten to the loftier portion of the Magic Isle where are found the most massive and well-built structures of Shakespearopolis. With silent meditation they traverse the quarter which holds the Houses of the Great Tragedies, till they come to the greatest one of all as well as the most famous and frequented. This is the Palace of Hamlet of which the labyrinthine passages compel them often to pause and contemplate its bewildering mysteries. But at last, having wandered through its mazes and even seen its one ghostly inhabitant, the company leaves the tragic quarter behind and mounts upward to the newest and highest portion of the city containing the Houses of Harmony amid which is perched on the topmost point the far-shining Temple of Prospero, whose distinctive attendants are Ariel and his spirits.

Accordingly this Overworld of the Magic Isle, its loftiest though not its mightiest Part, evokes for its visitors two kinds of supernal beings indwelling and charactering two supreme structures—one the largest and the other the least in size of the im-

portant edifices of the city. Both rise up over-worldly in mien and purport—the ghost-haunted Palace of Hamlet and the spirit-thronged Temple of Prospero.

Chorus Salutatory.

Again I bid you all welcome
Ye multitudinous peoples of Earth,
Who have voyaged around each hemisphere
To win the world of our Shakespearopolis,
The soul-built city uplifting the Magic Isle
Whose loftiest spectacle ye now are to vision.
Enter here the builder's mightiest structures,
The massively fated mansions of Tragedy,
And hearken his strongest and deepest utterance
Upheaved from the hearts of his heroes and heroines
In their mortal struggle with fate.
Then behold the builder himself, the poet,
As he writhes in the throes of his Genius,
His own tragic character first of all he enacts,
Terribly building his tragedy.
At his side dictating his passioned words,
The Dark Lady you hear in a whisper
Bidding him mold some form of herself
Into one of his women demonic,
Be it fury Goneril or Cordelia daughterly,
Both destroy whom they love and perish themselves.

So the woman Titanic turns the undoer of heroes
In this tragic quarter of Shakespearopolis
And Love itself whets Death's very scythe
Wielded by the Dark Lady of destiny;
The prime bond of creation dissolves now
Wreaking red vengeance against its own kin;
But the poet entranced still loves his love
Though it submerge both lover and loved,
And bloodily stabs its own stroke suicidal.
So you may see in these princely halls
Love's self-damnation and with it the world's,
The most appalling cataclysm of spirits great
Ever visioned upon this planet.
But the poet keeps building his own Inferno
Till he builds himself through it and out of it
Mounting up to his haven of healing
Where you will witness his Houses of Harmony
And hear their high music of man's mediation.

So now to the uppermost regions I speed you,
And to loftier thoughts I would lift you,
Where pinnacles our islanded Overworld
Indwelt of denizens spectral.
Though all this city itself be a spirit
And its fair mansions peopled of spirits,
Still it has too its ghostly Beyond
Where sways another dominion of beings
By the poet created out of his finest ether,

A fantasmal folk shaped to new bodies
Not framed after our mortal pattern,
A realm of shadows still super-shadowed;
Thus double is mirrored this magical world
As is your own terrestrial life.
And in place of your first Psychagogue
A new leader will be given you now
For this tour of the poet's weird Overworld,
Just the ghost-compeller himself, Horatio,
Who sighted the spectre and accosted it first
Then bore the news of this guest overworldly
To the young Hamlet, his gloom-ridden friend.

Ha! here we reach the palatial entrance,
And cast a shuddering glance at its haunted halls
Which ramble around in many a shadowy turn
Making dim corners for the abode
Of fleet imagery's creatures.

(The Ghost passes over.)

Behold the spirit of Hamlet's father
As it rises and darts by gloomily
From a cloud to a cloud!
Terrible visage contorted in agony!
Phantom wreaking its full revenge on itself!
Image looking out the Beyond its penalty
As if proclaiming its own tragedy!
Self-venging Ghost! thy spectral retaliation

Has cycled back to its source
Fulfilling the round of its deed's expiation.
There! it has vanished, saluting farewell
With its face grimacing Hell's tortures.

Ye guests from earth's every clime
Whose looks now answer this ghostly suffering
With its like in heart's sympathy,
I who am but the brief voice of welcome
Now bid you God-speed on your journey
To this Overworld of Shakespearopolis.

ACT FIRST.

The locality is transferred to the royal Palace of Hamlet in which the action has for its center the Ghost of the deceased Danish King whose various stages of inner transformation are set forth, from his first revenge, through contrition and penitence, to reconciliation. Thus the main theme of the Act is the redemption of the Ghost. But with this is also connected the complete restoration of Hamlet. For there still lurks in him a residue of his old trouble even after he has witnessed Hermione in Horatio's play of the mediatorial mother.

Alone in his room at the Hamlet Palace, Horatio walks up and down meditating on the new emergency in the condition of his friend.

SCENE FIRST.

Horatio (alone).

O despair! I feel darting through me
 A stroke of the Prince's own melancholy,
 And in trying to cure him of his disease
 Methinks I have caught it myself.
 To small purpose has been my effort;
 Hamlet, my friend, is not yet redeemed,
 But still roams these halls solitary in gloom

Brooding over his lot in sad soliloquy.
Hermione acted before him her part
Showing him motherhood's triumph of duty
To restore his shattered faith in woman
At the very source of his being;
Relief would play on his face for a while,
Then he would darken again to new desolation
Balking his permanent cure.
Some deeper malady hides in his soul
Which my medicine never has touched;
What is it I wonder, what is it?
I thought his faulted faith to Ophelia
Whom he so lovelessly banned to a cloister,
Still might becloud the sun of his soul;
So I brought here to this playhouse of Hamlet
Isabella the nun with her love
That in her the Prince might see his own fair lady
Restored to the hope of his sorrowing heart
From the nunnery whither he cursed her.
The dear appearance made him look up
And greet her tenderly while in his eyesight;
But as soon as she vanished off from the stage
Backward he drooped to his old night-world,
His pitiless vampyre's victim's again.
Alas! my long labor has turned out fruitless,
Though I spared nor my body nor mind;
Best actors hither I brought to the Magic Isle
From sea-walled Albion's distant capital,

Then my drama I wrote in my mind's tensest stress
To stamp on the turned brain of Hamlet
The way to his healful redemption,
That he himself might unwind the dread serpent
Which had caught his soul in its coils.
O Heaven, I have to confess to my failure,
And his very monster now whirls overhead
Its dark folds to ensnare me too.

Yet I shall not renounce my destiny's call,
I must start to find the profounder ailment
Which still diseases his spirit,
Though I have to probe to his being's last bottom;
For I must stay ever the fast-anchored friend,
Let him be or do whatever he may,
Friendship's own self I shall live as myself
And shrink not to help win him his ransom,
Else I too am undone in his undoing
And shall sink down to his tragedy,
Not mastering mine own ultimate lot;
Aye, to Hamlet's fate seems chorded this whole
world
Which otherwise falls with his wreck into chaos.
Look up! here he comes at fortunate season
Stooping his head and slowing his gait,
Yet forcefully forward pushing his body
Like a pale convalescent uprisen,
Not so sick as he was but not yet well,

Perchance half-way recovered,
But still with a cloud overhanging
Which threatens a fresh downfall of ills to happen
Unless from above there be a new intervention.
I shall slip into the path of his vision
And let him address me.

Hamlet.

Joy be thine, best friend, my Horatio,
And worthiest meed for thy play's intention
Which I have taken into my troubled heart,
Balming me with its relief—

Horatio.

But not making thee whole in its healing,
For I still have to mark thy obscuration,
The nighted fiend has never yet quit thee,
Quite shutting the sun from thy day,
Even if some sheen pours over the edges.

Hamlet.

I confess thou hast seen the truth of me
And lovingly breathed my shortcomings,
For despite thy heart's remedial service
My peace is not yet attained,
And I fear it never can be—
I am the incurably tragic.

Horatio.

No Hamlet, no; dismiss that delusion,
 Which may win the power of bringing to pass
 Its own dire fulfilment of death;
 Rally thy soldier's will, and then already
 Shalt thou be going the way remedial.
 Thy eclipse is not so full as it was,
 Though not yet passed, it surely is passing,
 For I see a new light circling its border;
 So to me whisper thine ill, to me thy confessor;
 That layer last of thy dread world-pain
 Turn up to the light in thy shrinking word,
 For that too must be banned from thy soul,
 Lest in thy tragedy thou, and I, and all of us
 Perish in Shakespearopolis fated.

Hamlet.

I shiver to say what me is bidden I must,
 For ere to me the Ghost had appeared already to
 thee,
 And through thy news did I hasten to see it
 When I heard it voice its terrible mandate:
 "Revenge thy father's murder."
 That ghostly sentence is still roiling my soul,
 And keeps it perturbed with its struggle;
 Oft do I blench at the heart-riven words,

As the Ghost confessed me its sins and its torments,

How it was writhing in flames infernal

For the blackening crimes of its life;

And still it had to suffer a longer ordeal

In its fiery probation—

O God, I must go and rescue my father

And give myself for his ransom!

Unhappy Ghost, beyond and ever beyond

Runs thy guilt's future requital;

How can I undo thy perdition

Since redemption thou needest more than I

And must obtain it, else I too am lost;

O my ghostly parent, Satan's own sufferer,

For thee I proclaim my new faith:

Never shall I be redeemed in this world

Till in that thou too art redeemed.

Horatio.

Calm thyself, O friend, desist from such thought,

And turn to the duty just here before thee,

Which is thine own soul's last recovery.

Let that nebulous Overworld care for its own,

Which methinks it can do better than thou,

Otherwise it may swallow thee up

In its blank supersensible dreamery.

Hamlet.

I cannot, I shall not—no peace for me
 In thy heart-denying philosophy!
 Can I get rid of revenge on this side
 If I free not of it my father yonder?
 This life is not saved in only saving itself,
 Leaving the other outside of its call;
 Thy help is worthless if it reach not to that,
 And bring the mortal to serve the immortal.

Horatio.

At time's portal such a faith may be knocking,
 Methinks I may hear it coming afar
 Even if it be not of me—not yet.
 I learn that the Ghost has appeared again
 In our Palace just at the vestibule,
 With anguished features of punishment
 Seen of all our visitors entering
 That they paled in terror and pity.
 Speechless to them it sped past with a gaze
 As if it were once more seeking thee here
 To lay on thy heart some new message—

Hamlet.

O Horatio, the greater task it has brought us
 That we fulfill our uttermost labor and last:

The Ghost's atonement beyond,
And with it mine own just here.
Silence! hitherward surges the group of strangers
Whom I saw weep at Hermione's play
As she enacted my other redemption;
'Twas thy work of high benefaction,
But alas! not enough for the wretchedness
Which layers last in the depths of my being.
Go, Horatio; I cannot meet them,
Bid them for me the welcome of courtesy
To my Palace's freedom.

SCENE SECOND.

(The visitors enter as Hamlet darts off leaving Horatio behind to receive them, and to respond to their inquiries.)

Horatio.

Friends, our hearty salutation; take possession each for himself, of our royal Hamlet Palace with its inmates, of whom I am one. How can I be of service? You have lately seen the spectacle of Hamlet, its old as well as new part. How did it affect you, the whole round of it, including the redemption of the Danish Prince?

Pandora.

I am a born interrogation, and my first question is, Do you still see ghosts? And do you think I could see them if we should pass the night on the platform at Elsinore?

Horatio.

I mark you well—you are seeking not so much Hamlet's secret as mine, deeming that I too have my mystery.

Pandora.

Did you not fabricate that ghost yourself? I suspected it when I saw it acted. You made it for the purpose of conveying to the young Hamlet the dreadful information which you in some dark way had found out. And is not all this spook-work a strange business for a philosopher?

Horatio.

Others saw the spectre before I did. Native inquisitiveness of the woman you show, you try to get behind that apparition, but I say to you it is final and speaks in its own right. True it is that I have my mystery as well as Hamlet—he has never told me his and I have never told him mine—I question if either of us could if he would.

Young Prospero.

Well mystified I find even your words at present. Let me confess my suspicion of another scheme of yours: the capture of Hamlet's ship by pirates, while on his way to England. In the whole event I glimpsed not so much divine providence as human provision, especially that of Horatio.

Horatio.

What put that into your head? But I observe that you have not lost your imagination in our imaginative Shakespearopolis, which you must not forget, is a whole worldful of spirits discarnate.

Pandora.

Ha! your look betrays you, according to my reading of your face's scripture. I wonder indeed if the God came down and directed that event. I too have to think that divinity took less hand in shaping such an end than ordinary mortality.

Horatio.

Bless me! What a set of critics and hair-splitters have entered our Hamlet Palace, and seek to pry every stone of it apart, reducing it to original chaos!

Pandora.

Aye, just here is seen what you are, I mean your character—you reveal the deep-thinking philosopher of Wittenberg, you are the hidden mainspring in the background of all the inbreaking occurrences of this strange drama, which we have just witnessed with so much interrogating wonder.

Young Prospero.

A bit of knowledge I too have on this subject: you, Horatio, brought these actors to this royal Palace that they might be employed to catch the conscience of the king, but still more deeply to catch Hamlet's own conscience, for you know that his soul was enmeshed as badly as that of his uncle in the conflict of his convictions.

Horatio.

Otherwise he would have needed no redemption through the woman mediatorial, whom I hither brought before him in action, which was his custom's best way of taking his spiritual medicine.

Young Prospero.

Such a character as hers would I appropriate somehow and carry off with me to my Atlantis, even to the very heart of it where rolls seaward the mighty River across yonder sunset. What say you, my Lady all-gifted?

Pandora.

You, uplifting youth, thrill in me the deepest chord of my soul's longing. I have also the Pro-

methean aspiration to form human beings, breathing into them a new eternal life, not amenable to habitation of flesh.

Young Prospero.

Here I would find my ultimate vocation. So I have traveled to the city of the man-maker and of the woman-maker too, that I take my best lesson in such creation. O my Genius, can I not likewise become such a builder, not only of individuals, but of a society, city, yea of a world like this magic Shakespearopolis thousand-souled yet one soul.

Horatio.

You twain seem to be cooing all to yourselves. But let me declare to you what stirs me most deeply: My dearest friend Hamlet, whom you saw in Hermione's play, is not yet restored.

Young Prospero.

How! Not after all your beneficent labor for his cure, and the loving trouble I saw you show down in the Magic Wood! What is this fresh phase of his malady?

Horatio.

No longer he dwells upon his mother's conduct, or that of his lady-love, or of King Claudius, but

he turns back to his father's spirit, and broods over its message which bade him: "Revenge, Revenge." He will in some way rescue the Ghost, not only from its sulphurous flames, but also from its sinful behest of fratricidal vengeance, which really is its burning torment.

Young Prospero.

Indeed! Then another newest drama dawns upon the outlook, in order to redeem this lost spirit beyond. Another more defiant Redeemer, you will need, one who dares break into the Overworld—who?

Horatio.

I repeat, I must save Hamlet or sink to perdition myself. Unless I impart to him the hope which I have, I shall lose it.

Pandora.

So then you are to fabricate another Ghost with its new message from beyond.

Horatio.

I was as stout a disbeliever and scoffer as you, and I, the philosopher, scouted what the soldiers told me about the first apparition till I, going with them on watch, beheld it rise and stalk across our

guard-line at Elsinore in full armor as if marching to battle. Just through yonder stile it suddenly slid out of the chill night-air, and trod the platform with a soldier's warlike quickstep—

(The Ghost enters showing contortions of torment in its face; then stripping off one by one the parts of its mail—helmet, hauberk and greaves—it flings them loathingly to earth.)

Young Prospero.

See, there it comes, bursting its shape from the lowering mist at your word.

Horatio.

King Hamlet's Ghost again, but how it remorsefully changes! Not now erect as before with stern commanding mien, but bowed humbly as if in some deep contrition! Not now shining in steel against the foe, but clad in ashen penitential habit! Head bared of its beaver and bent in seeming supplication! The young Hamlet must be told of this.

Young Prospero.

Hark that deep-rolling thunder of groans as if heaved from the damned at the bottom of the pit!

Pandora.

Enough, enough of the Ghost! Let us all be gone
from this Hell-haunted spot!

Horatio.

Look! it is going, but turns back to do its parting
act. With eye-shot of vengeful lightning, it seizes
its sword, and hurls it over the battlements as if to
slay its very weapon—I shall address it—no, 'tis
gone.

SCENE THIRD.

(Stirred by what he has seen, Horatio moves off alone to think over its meaning for himself, and then to bring the message to his friend Hamlet. He is followed by young Prospero.)

Horatio (to himself).

I too with the crowd would flee from the Ghost,
Though it has left me its problem despairful,
What I have hitherto done for my Hamlet
Turns out but zero at last.
The players, Hermione, even Ophelia,
Acting my drama of mediation
I brought him to purge his disease—
All, all to no purpose or little.
This moment is pushing me off the edge
Into the black abysses with Hamlet,
And I become that from which I would rescue
him—
I feel as if I would have to give up
My very destiny.

Young Prospero.

I have heard your hopeless soliloquy;
It speaks not Horatio as I have known him,
Recover yourself and will what you are;
Be assured, the Powers are working to help you.

Horatio.

You are right, young fellow, I grip me your courage.

Gloom accurst, quit me, I shall not surrender,
Again I must reach to rescue my friend,
Such is my conscience first and deepest,
My duty has kindled my heart afresh
To save Hamlet and with him this city
Which still stays doomed in his doom.
I shall descend to Inferno, if such be my call,
Like the old Florentine singer,
And not merely to view the damned ghost
But it to redeem from its burning damnation,
Mediating the soul's last penalty
E'en in the realm of the dead,
Scaling the walls of old Hell
For the weal of lost Hamlet still living.

Young Prospero.

Hardly will you, the human, be called on
To do such a deed superhuman,
Transcending this mortal existence.

Horatio.

I already have dared to save him from death,
Plucking his daggered hand from his suicide.

But now I dare go beyond dread Death itself
And extinguish the blaze of God-curst Gehenna
In the work of my friend's redemption.
But if I may not perform such a deed,
At least I must show it enacted
Undoing in word not only Earth but Hell,
Else the Devil will get both Hamlet and me
And even God Himself who also needs rescue,
Blasphemed and blamed as He is by his own creatures.

So a new and more difficult task is mine—
A more daring, deeper, far-embracing drama
Forecasting the greater human restoration—
If I would heal to wholeness my Hamlet
Who finds his lot to be linked with his parent
Unatoned in the ghost-world;
The quick with the dead must suffer to save them,
Or with them be lost in their last perdition.

Young Prospero.

Such, then, is your newest philosophy
Hammered out by life's deepest experience,
Not laid down in the course at the University
When you and Hamlet studied at Wittenberg,
Though you then partook of the time's new science
Which would inhibit revenge on this side,
But over there employ it for torment eternal

Damning the sinner for evermore.

Horatio, guide, teacher, you never spoke thus before

In all our communings of the Magic Isle,
Where you I first met and took as my teacher,
And we both overheard Hamlet the gloom-shent
Oft confessing his fate,
But no word spoke he then of the spirit's Beyond,
Nor did you, my Horatio—now tell me
The new motive compelling such emprise unearthly.

Horatio.

Not only here but also hereafter
Let vengeance be given its penalty,
Yet in the contrite soul be atoned and forgiven
Even if over life's bourne it be sped.
Thus man's ransom is made universal,
Not merely of Earth and of Heaven, but aye of Hell
Where it is most poignantly needed.
In the living son let it be wrought,
But also unselfishly shared with the ghostly father
Whose spirit disembodied must also repent,
Yet must hither come back and confess,
Atoning its sorest transgression,
If it be truly immortal
And would win with its own the son's salvation.
For penitence still is the soul's purgation
Everlastingly, not altogether confined

To the time of this little body of earth.
Just that is what makes man eternal :
To undo his own sinful limit,
Ever remaking himself to be whole
Here or elsewhere over the border.

Young Prospero.

Last best lesson of my spirit's teacher !
But unravel me more this new problem of Hamlet
Of which you have grown so cognizant.

Horatio.

The old King, Hamlet's father, the Ghost
Made the young Hamlet tragic in this life
From the Overworld hither commanding revenge,
Which assailed the youth's deeper conscience
Won at Wittenberg with its new order ;
So the dutiful son will now disobey
The vengeful mandate paternal.
Yet more compulsive rises his soul's last bidding ;
He feels enforced to descend to Inferno,
Daring to snatch from the flames his burning sire
To transform old hate to young penitence
That the Ghost itself be restored to peace from re-
venge,
Freed of its curse implacable.

Young Prospero.

Alas, methinks I need just such a discipline
 To make my life integral with its Creator,
 Ere I can copy it out into writ
 For my dear Atlantids, folk of the future.

Horatio.

Yet a farthermost future I glimpse in this task,
 Sharing eternity more than even Atlantis:
 Hell itself with its rebel King Satan
 Is to be mediated in Hamlet's last drama
 Which foreplays God Himself rescued from ven-
 geance,
 And for Hamlet the Universe too shall be atoned,
 The one All-in-all everlasting,
 Through its own selfhood spaceless and timeless.
 Otherwise Hamlet's demon will always return,
 His hideous Vampyre born of his finitude
 Will ever steal brooding over his soul,
 Clutching it down to the spirit's Erebos.
 And the poet in the might of creation
 Will transcribe in letters himself and his world,
 He too by his pen must work his own ransom
 Redeeming the Overworld lost,
 Else he will be paired in penalty here
 With the Ghost of Hamlet unredeemed yonder,
 Yoke-fellows both in the same damnation.

Young Prospero.

Let me take breath to fathom your lore,
For I gasp to swallow at once such a worldful.
But see! the crowd returns from its scare
At the mystery seen in the Hamlet Palace,
Even Pandora creeps back looking new questions.

Horatio.

Whom do I see coming? Is it possible?
A strange person in front and garbed as a student!
An acquaintance who studied philosophy
With me and Hamlet at the University
Where he had a weird reputation for magic,
Being whispered to be an adept in Black Art
Through which he conjured the Devil himself
And made with old Splayfoot a pact overworldly.
The sight of the man rays me a lightning relief
Which lifts my thought's oppression.
I would bespeak him at once—I am off.

Young Prospero.

I shall steal along to list this stranger's Beyond,
Him would I know and his Devil too.

SCENE FOURTH.

(Through the vestibule of the Hamlet Palace the crowd of visitors is surging as Horatio steps forth and salutes one of them, a middle-aged man whom he had known as a student at Wittenberg. The man advances toward Horatio and addresses him.)

Studiosus.

Pardon me, sir; I met you at the University when you were there as the companion of the Prince of Denmark.

Horatio.

I remember you well—at your service, sir. But I cannot now recall your name—May I have the favor?

Studiosus.

Johannes Faust; I studied me gray in the four Faculties—Theology, Law, Medicine and especially Philosophy; but all my red-hot endeavor simply be-
gat in me a burning No by which I am consumed. So I have come to your new University to try if it will help rid me of my Satanic zero, which is not merely a round emptiness but is filled with the blue blazes of brimstone.

Horatio.

Indeed! Is that the outcome of your deep lifelong study of philosophy? The last time I saw you, I well remember; you were talking Aristotle with young Hamlet the Dane, and had tackled the philosopher's Essence of Being. Your face peeped thin and pointed like that of a hungry delver into the dark unknown; it was also grimed with coal-smoke, you might have just come from an experiment in alchemy. Still you had an exalted upper glance as if you were reading in the skies a line of Homer's poetry. Do you recall the Danish Prince?

Studiosus.

I am in pursuit of him now. I have heard of his new dominion far larger than Denmark and much better known by all the world. Indeed he has grown to be altogether the most famous Dane that ever lived, I would fathom his present greatness.

Horatio.

Well, you helped lay the germ of his later development through your speculation at Wittenberg, having injected into his soul that burning Nought of yours. But it is you who surprise me here, I never expected to see you in our Shakespearopolis, I thought somehow that you were dead before it was born.

Studiosus.

My dear sir, I am hard to kill, and I propose to stay alive and active for some centuries yet. Indeed my belief is that I shall undergo many incarnations in the future.

Young Prospero (aside).

I wonder if he is ever going to pay a visit to my country, the far-off Atlantis. He will, he must, that I now forefeel. I shall watch for him and signal his arrival with his new Inferno.

Horatio.

So you have come from German Wittenberg to our English Shakespearoplis which is also a University with its peculiar curriculum. I hold it to be the new University of the time, more universal than even Wittenberg with its scattered unrelated, unorganized lore. You know I was there for years, and that University seemed to me rather a Diversity, Hamlet in his discontent re-coined it a Multi-versity, which indeed fed his inborn doubt and pessimism. And you, O silvered Studiosus, wandering about with your Hell-lit zero which sets souls aflame, are a right product of it, are you not?

Studiosus.

A product, perhaps a wrong product. But I have now come to your universal University, to which all peoples, religions, races are flocking, as if for some new evangel of salvation. A gleam of it shot across sea and land into my little dark, cob-webbed corner, and I followed the ray hither. Behold the eager multitude overflowing this Hamlet Palace—I am not alone, you see.

Horatio.

Now for the deeper question: Were you not expelled from the University for having made a pact with Satan which you signed with your blood? Such was the grisly story current at Wittenberg already in my time.

Studiosus.

True in the main; but I first made the Devil in me even if he existed outside of me already made. Then I called him Mephistopheles whose hold on me I came hither to break.

Horatio.

That name was familiar at Wittenberg, but I have heard it only once passingly mentioned in this

city. It belongs not here. Still, as you seek our discipline let me ask if you witnessed on your way hither the Venetian Trilogy, the pandrama of the poet's whole life—his early joy, his tragic lapse, and then his recovery. It plays the mediation of the fallen spirit, with whom I imagine you have some affinity.

Studiosus.

I watched the spectacle and pondered it well, finding in its message a moment's throb of relief. But I have to confess that it did not probe to the center of my trouble. Your Shakespeare, poet that he is, may rescue himself from his Dark Lady, from the clutch of her demonic love; but my demon Mephistopheles denies not only the truth of love, but all truth; and I, the passionless cold student, have to be saved not so much from the untrue woman, as from untruth itself.

Young Prospero.

Cannot our great artificer build a new house here in Shakespearopolis for this new man with his new devil who is now not a she but a he?

Horatio.

Verily a problem of brain-stretching outlook. It evokes not only another character but another world

to be taken up into our city—the sweep from love the destroyer to the Destroyer in person. Moreover it shifts the central figure of our Shakespearopolis from female to male; the love-undoer, the heart-slayer through the heart, is the Dark Woman; but the truth-undoer, the thought-slayer through thought, is the Dark Gentleman—I have oft seen him incorporate even in the Clergyman and in the University Professor. I tell you the Prince of Darkness now rises and overshadows our own Princess of Darkness of whom you have already heard so much in your journey through this city.

Pandora.

Denier you are indeed, O Studiosus, denying the woman-soul mediatorial which has not only rescued the poet himself, but the poet's world here in the Magic Isle.

Studiosus.

His redemption is, I repeat, from love as destroyer, he is saved from woman by woman; but not Hermione, not Imogen, could cast out my Mephistopheles who is the he-devil.

Pandora.

I shall never be happy till I try that deed or see it tried. Do they take women as students at Wit-

tenberg? I long not only to witness but to experience in my own life the genesis of your Mephistopheles. I would know that demonic antitype of the Almighty Himself.

Studiosus.

You will come to his acquaintance without traveling so far away; indeed methinks, I can catch a gleam of his eye-fire in you already as it scorches me. This city I see to be woman-ruled through and through, both in its good and its bad. Not so at Wittenberg, devil and angel there are men.

Pandora.

You confirm me. I hold that Shakespeare himself is a woman in soul; his manhood is but the outer form or appendage, but his womanhood is his very self. Then I have heard it whispered that Hamlet is actually a female in disguise. I dream that this whole Shakespearopolis is a woman.

Horatio.

Enough! such a view scandalizes me who am his most intimate friend, now seeking his recovery not yet complete. I must be off to bring him some fresh relief.

Young Prospero.

Before we part, permit me to throw out another inquiry which has been seething through my brain to my tongue's tip. Explain me, O Studiosus, the origin of this malady which started Hamlet's trouble, and has begotten in you the very Devil, and still rages through the University of Wittenberg and indeed through all the land. Now, my deep-studied philosopher, point me out the germ of this infection not of the body, but of the soul, whose pestilential touch I begin to feel myself.

Studiosus.

A large theme, the largest indeed of present history; but I can briefly sketch my view. The great breach of the age, the millennial cataclysm of human spirit is now at its height; the separation from the old order, the old faith, the old church has shipwrecked Providence and left man's soul quite rudderless. It is true that Luther having once started the break would dyke the flood, and so he builds this Wittenberg and its creed. But the Ocean crushes through all his bulwarks, and the whole ordered world is undermined for many of us—for me and aye for Hamlet too. So there is born the Spirit that doubts and denies, the anarchic counterpart of God Himself, the new devil Mephis-

topheles, born even of reform, of freedom, of this progress; and in their name he always does his diabolic work. In fact Mephistopheles in these days claims to be the great reformer. Well, is he not?

Pandora.

I must yet go to Wittenberg and see that younger Satan who has entered the time's Paradise, and I would hearken his new temptation, else I am no true daughter of Mother Eve.

Studiosus.

But in this dark picture I must note the counterstroke of good: the deepened sense of individual responsibility, in fine the new conscience. Strange double birth of our own age: with its devil Mephistopheles is also born its angel conscience. I tell you, Hamlet has both, as I have seen him in his play, and both in desperate conflict, through which he rises to be the representative mirroring most deeply his era. And I know both furiously battling within me, hence I have come to your city for my relief and perchance my redemption.

Horatio.

You are a lost soul, O Studiosus, at least in this time and place. Our Shakespeare, great as he is,

cannot absolve you from your bond with Satan. You will have to suffer in his clutches, I would predict, two centuries longer, when a new poet may arise who will rescue you on this side and it may be over yonder too. But this present world cannot release you, I have myself witnessed the trial. A great genius, Christopher Marlowe, whom Shakespeare knew and loved, has shown your Mephistopheles—from him I first learned the name—triumphant over you, O Studiosus. But that is not all. Marlow played his own Mephistopheles to himself, the fiend who had gripped him but whom he could not exorcise by writ, as Shakespeare did his Dark Lady. So he died tragically in the clutch of his own devil, actually fulfilling his own drama in life and death. No, I say, Shakespearopolis cannot ransom thee, Johannes Faust.

Studiosus.

Two hundred years—a long time for me to wait in torment—I am worse off than Hamlet's Ghost.

Young Prospero.

And that I affirm is not the end. You can never be saved and allow Mephistopheles to run loose. He too must be redeemed, else he will get you again.

Horatio.

Not yet and not here. Wittenberg, Shakespeareopolis, Europe cannot mediate the Devil. That lies far out of the range of its inherently double and strife-ful character.

Pandora.

Then your Europe must lose God too, and shall perish in itself, perchance of its own sword. I foresee it and turn my face from its universal tragedy.

Young Prospero.

For its salvation, I see a wholly new ordered world is needed. I think I know somewhat of it already. And that will be the theme of the coming world-poet who will have to handle both the Dark Lady and the Dark Gentleman, the he-devil as well as the she-devil, even rescuing them and not merely saving from them their victims. For if you leave the Devil outside your redemption he will play the Devil with it still. I say, you cannot let the Destroyer run and save man, yea save God. So Wittenberg, Shakespeareopolis, even Europe, cannot finally bring the human ransom, this whole social and institutional order of which the Devil is born and in which he does his work, must be transformed and transcended, not destroyed but overmade.

Wretched Studiosus, I might say Studiosissimus, I pity thee—Horatio declares it will take two hundred years for that germ of Mephistopheles now laid in thy brain to mature when the new poet will arrive to reveal it and to cast it out of thee. And yet when he casts it out, it is still on hand and at work outside. Must not I get hold of just that out-cast, diabolic though it be, and reclaim it for my Atlantids? I scheme building a Prosperopolis to save the Devil and with him God too who is going to get lost over here.

Horatio.

Night is settling upon us and begins to darken the Palace of Hamlet, in which you all can repose as guests till morn, when your new journey begins. But I invite to mine own room young Prospero whom I first met in the Magic Wood near the sea-coast, when he had come from his ship alone. You will then be so good as to excuse me. I as soldier on duty have to stand guard tonight. I choose you, my young friend, to be the companion of my watch.

SCENE FIFTH.

(Horatio and Young Prospero as sentinels are pacing the forecourt of the Hamlet Palace. They speak now and then in an underbreath of expectancy. The moon has risen and shines brightly as they slip into the shade of a yew tree.)

Horatio.

The moon shimmers ghostly on these leaves,
And turns their fluttering twirls to a spectral
dance.

Young Prospero.

Methinks I hear their bodeful whisperings
As they lap this moon-lit air.

Horatio.

A breath of breeze hums a moan in the foliage
As it falls the dark folds of its drapery.

Young Prospero.

I hear its undertone sighing out of the grave
Whose ominous note makes me shrink.

Horatio.

It sounds like the weird overture to words
Not yet forthcome but on the way;
Louder it swells—but now it is dying.

Young Prospero.

Look! a dark figure moves out of the Palace's
shadow;

Horatio, it is drawing this way.

Horatio.

Its slow approach I have already glimpsed,
And weened I heard its lisped murmurings
Commingle with the suspirations of this tree-top
In tender cadences tuned from the Overworld.

Young Prospero.

More distinct is outlined its shape in the sheen;
Good Horatio, I have seen it before.

Horatio.

Aye, it is Hamlet again in his mood of midnight
Discussing still with his shadowed self,
As thou didst hear him once in the Magic Wood.
At thy first arrival from far Atlantis.

Young Prospero.

I recognize him well in his sabled stole
Which limns him in black on these moonbeams;
How keenly my memory tells me again
As once I hearkened his agony's wrenches

Which threatened me too in sympathy!
 But I hoped you had rescued your friend
 From his soul's haunting Vampyre
 Through the deed of the woman mediatorial.

Horatio.

Not altogether, yet perchance somewhat.
 But hist! You will hear from the patient himself.

Young Prospero.

Not so downcast he seems, nor yet is he upborne.
 Mark, he starts to speak.

Hamlet (to himself).

Uneasy still I stroll to get rid of the crowd
 That rolls surging on with the hurricane's push
 Into each little nook of my royal Palace,
 Though the most spacious house of the city.
 So again I commune with my Self's last secret
 As is my wont in my dreadest distraction;
 For another urgency lashes me now
 Not sprung of the deed of my mother,
 Since the remedial grace of woman
 Has healed my heart of woman's curse
 And restored to my love its lost hope.
 But the man's doom abides in me still,
 The behest of my father the ghost

Loading me down with the weight of his vengeance

Which my new-born conscience upbears not.
Nor yet can I be rid of his spectral voice crying
"Revenge! Revenge!"

So it comes I would see him once more
Step out of the night in his self-shining shape
And cross me just here on this platform,
To tell some later report of himself;
Tense is my longing to hearken his ghostly words
Voicing his lot from the earthless Beyond,
To which he once fled through death's portal
Which cannot confine his freed spirit.

How dare I ever forget his dark confession
That he was burning in sulphurous torment,
Doomed to the pain of the criminal damned
During the day's terrestrial sunshine,
Then driven to haunt his former abode by night
Where I am seeking to meet him just now.

What a groan upburst from his torture,
As if pierced by a fresh bolt of Hell-fire
When he bade me, his son, to wreak vengeance,
That I murder his brother, my uncle!
Thus he from beyond turned fratricide
In his spirit's pure will unbodied of power,
Repeating old Cain's primal damnation,
Himself re-enacting his brother's own crime,
And ensnaring me guiltless in guilt

That I besmear me in blood of my kin and my King.
 Thence rises my demon again, Melancholia,
 Ever waxing afresh from the hideous clash
 Between old requital and new conviction;
 So I delayed in my deed, swaying in doubt
 From one side of the world to the other
 Till fated I fell in the middle,
 And that rounded my tragedy's finish
 From which now I would win me redemption complete
 And with thine, dear parent, recover my hope to
 the full
 By lifting thee out of thy torment infernal.
 O my father's ghost, come back to me here
 And bring from beyond a new message
 Not of revenge but of forgiveness!
 May not the sin be burned out of thee
 By thy suffering's fire purgatorial
 Which has earned thy release from the torment of
 guilt!
 My love of thee bulks to such compass
 That it breaks down the bounds of forbearance
 And I can never be saved with thee lost,
 Of thy rescue beyond I must know
 Ere redeemed I may be on this side.
 See the cloud obscuring the moonlit radiance
 And rolling toward me from yon gray Overworld:
 Is it fiend Melancholia's dread apparition

Stretching its tentacles curved to claw me
Down into my parent's penal gloom?
It slowly changes from dark to light,
It breaks and lets forth a spectral shape—
My father's spirit
Clad in the weeds of peace,
Yea in the white robe of heavenly grace,
With a soft reconciled eye
He speaks now sighless—

The Ghost.

I have felt O son, the pulsed throes of thy yearning
Across my Overworld's borderland,
In response I burst through Death's strict guard,
I too have been longing for thee.

Hamlet.

O my father by me more desired than ever!
No longer affrights me thy ghostliness
Which once could ice me to shivers!
How congenial I feel to thy shape!
Now I take joy in thy fantomal voice
Which tenderly words me the throbs of thy heart
From over the bourne of mortality!

The Ghost.

I have need of thee now to help me uprise
To my new liberation of love!

A tick still darts through me of the old pang
Which hither I brought from the stain of your
 earth.

And thou, my son, hast the power to free me,
Undoing, atoning my word of revenge.

Hamlet.

And I for thee have in turn the self-same need,
I mark the merciful change in thy note
Attuned to thy heavenly vesture of peace :
But where is thy helm, thy mailed coat of hostile
 steel,
And thy sword with hand on its hilt ?

The Ghost.

No longer they cumber my body and soul,
I flung them to Hell where they belong,
My spirit of war I whelmed to the pit,
And with it lies burning my retaliation
Which I, the impenitent Ghost, once bade thee,
Coming back from my fiery penance beyond.

Hamlet.

O my new happiness sprung of my sonship !
Soothed I feel of my one unremedied pang
Which my father's damnation shot through me
When it fell from his ghostly lips confessed,

Goring me through with a prong of Hell's lightning.

Tell me, then, of thy spirit's renascence
That I may know and take example.

The Ghost.

When I had spoken that terrible word of revenge,
Though my lips hedged at the furious sound,
I began falling, and continued to fall
Deeper beneath to the circling flames of perdition
Which had to sear out of my vengeful heart
What it still bore of mortal corruption.
Conscience lashed me with its scourge of serpents
Down to the last round of the soul's Inferno
Into the very presence of Satan
Whom I created anew out of mine own damned
self

Though he had his own existence as well.
Him then I saw as mine own and me,
I chilled and shrank and wept at the view
The hottest tears of the cleft heart's sorrow,
Then slowly rose with resolve penitential
Bending around my upward return
Never to stop till I could meet thee again
And unsay my speech of revenge.
A great moment is that when you see the Devil,
That moment brings the decision for or against,
Striking fate's tetering balance
Just in the eye-curse of the Destroyer.

Hamlet.

Great Ghost, with thine has tallied my trial
On this side of the universe;
I here have lived my descent into Hades
In whose darkest bottom I had to be rescued,
Rounding upward my restoration
Not from Satan's own self but the woman Satanic.
Now I feel reconciled with mine own being
For Conscience no longer turns Fury to hound me
 deathward,
But an angel to help me love life.

The Ghost.

Know that I too am with thee redeemed
Having unsaid my message of wrath,
And changed it to the evangel of ruth
With ghostly shrift to thee, O my son confessor.
To help thee ban thy black Vampyre I come,
To aid thy undoing of Death and the Devil.

Hamlet.

But the wicked King Claudius, thy brother,
Whose treachery whelmed thee to torture beyond—

The Ghost.

Leave him alone to be his own vengeance
Which he surely will wreak on himself;
Thou art not to take God's place, nor am I.

Hamlet.

Shall we not try to redeem him too,
With us so bound up in kinship and guilt?
And my mother, thy queen, dear woman of unfaith,
Canst thou not seek with new love to restore her,
Bringing thy Overworld's message in person?
Once I tried it on this side, but failed—

The Ghost.

That will make in this Book a new chapter
Unwritten as yet of this city of ours.
Now I am off beyond to my penitence still,
I feel the first shot of dawn dart through me
Twingeing my ghostly shape to a pain.

Hamlet.

Stay and tell me more of thy spirit's state
Which I would know as the truth of me too
Faintly foreshadowed in longings immortal;
And thy great discipline would I learn here.

The Ghost.

See! that quick matutinal sheen from the East
Bids me depart to my Overworld,
Whither my hour is running now due.

Hamlet.

Benefactor, Father, Ghost, wait for me,
Take me along to be with thee fateless,

And dwell in thy reconciled presence forever
 Out of the reach of my demon of darkness,
 Dread Melancholia. O speak me once more,
 And bid thy gloom-ridden son flee with thee beyond.

The Ghost.

Subdue thy fiend on this side in manhood,
 Bring it not with thee as did I my revenge,
 For thy task thus tests thee far harder.
 But crescent Aurora melts my form to a voice;
 Now thou art able, my son, to ransom thyself—
 Farewell.

Hamlet.

Gone, alas! But now I know I shall see him again,
 And that anchors my last consolation,
 I shall see him again and the dear ones departed.
 Look! before him my old haunting Vampyre takes
 flight

Unshrouding the world's young hope to my view.
 But who comes here slipping into my solitude?
 Horatio! Good friend how is it I spied thee not?

Horatio.

Hidden I have overheard thy new evangel:
 The redemption of thy father's Ghost,
 And with it thine own has also been wrought.
 Me too it upheaves in the soul's depths

To rebuild from the base that philosophy
Which both of us took once from Wittenberg.
But this gospel last of our Shakespearopolis
I must proclaim to the expectant visitors
Who with the sun-up are hitherward trooping
To hear this finale of Hamlet's Overworld,
And then to look good-bye to its ghostly grandeur
Which so weirdly has tranced them to think over
their heads.

Wistfully they are quitting the view of your Palace
With its half-seen subtleties luring the look,
As backward they glance at our tragical world.
Still they have once more to mount higher
To witness this city's uppermost Temple
Where Prospero reigns with his spirits
Hymning in word and deed the soul's last attune-
ment.

Hamlet.

Forth to thy task and I forth to mine own!
There drives me a duty as yet unfulfilled
Which now I owe to my mother;
Her I long for as my best completion
If I may lead her yet to the Temple of Penitence,
Which I could not before.

SCENE SIXTH.

(Hamlet is seen stepping away rapidly in the distance while Horatio slowly retires to the background where he left young Prospero.)

Horatio.

The Ghost has vanished and I am turned on myself
To fathom this Overworld's startling message.

Young Prospero.

The gladsome news of young Hamlet restored
Would I bear with me back to Atlantis,
Setting it down in my volume of travels.
But much mightier wings me the wonderful word
Which hath to record the Ghost's redemption
Gospeled over the bourne from beyond,
Proclaiming the weal of the soul immortal.
All this I shall build in my new written city
Which here I glimpse dawning—my Prosperopolis.
But my father now I shall seek for his blessing
That I be also restored to him and his Overworld.

Horatio.

Yes, thy next step is to mount to Prospero's Temple
Which gleams afar from the top of our city

Over all the parts of this Magic Isle
To its watery border of sparkles:
Like beautiful Parthenon from the Acropolis
Shining down over Athenian temple and grove
To the Egean's blue chorus of sea-waves.

Young Prospero.

There in that Temple I too shall be penitent
As again I look on the face of my parent,
To him confessing my youthful transgression
And beseeching his godlike forgiveness.
Thus perchance I may soften his heart
That he in his love impart me his Book
With its lettered lore of the centuries
Which I would carry to the world's future.
But, Horatio, thou startest not with me?

Horatio.

Thither I may not pass, 'tis over my limit
Which is surmounted here by Ariel's realm
Swayed by his sovereign imagination;
Him there in his home again thou shalt meet.
Look! the day-god has burst down over us
In flaming cataracts pouring his radiance
And banning the eerie night-world of ghosts.
Our watch is past and salutes the new sunrise,
Press on to thy goal with the rush of the crowd.

Young Prospero.

Fare thee well, my journey's best companion,
 Thy picture I shall not forget to print
 In my memory's book of gratitude—
 But what is this bright spectacle coming?

ACT SECOND.

The locality is still the Overworld in which now the transition is made from the ghost-haunted Palace of Hamlet to the spirit-thronged Temple of Prospero, the highest height of Shakespearopolis to which there has been a gradual ascent, and from which may be taken a complete survey of the Magic Isle.

The connection between Prospero and Hamlet is seen in the fact that both are monarchs wronged by false brothers who usurp their thrones, but the one awards to his brother repentance and forgiveness, the other revenge and death. Hence Prospero's abode, in its deepest character, is the Temple of Atonement, set upon the top of Shakespearopolis as the crown of its glory, and overlooking the world past and to be.

SCENE FIRST.

(The first meeting between the father and the son, the former of the Magic Isle and the latter of Atlantis. The youth, as he beholds his ancestral abode, soliloquizes.)

Young Prospero (to Himself).

The sunniest Palace glinting the Overworld
And upbuilding a song to its musical summit

Which peers down from loftiest Shakespearopolis
Smiling over the Magic Isle to the seas
As they kiss it from sun-up to sun-down,
I enter—the ether-wrought Temple of Prospero
Shiningly hung up in Heaven by spirits.
Methinks this beautiful structure loves me
More than the grander palatial mansions,
And thrills me a tender caress to my heart
As I glance at its exquisite measures
Throbbing sweet concord through the whole city,
Even attuning the throes of its tragedy.
Strains harmonious from its proportions divine
Sing in my soul their celestial composure,
Lulling the heart with visions of Paradise,
After the desperate pains of the Hamlet Palace
Which, though eased in penitence ghostly,
Still send an afterglow's sheen of their sorrows.
All the tones of this orchestral Temple
Wind through one another in deep reconciliation
To token its spirits atoned and atoning
Whom now my hap is to know, if I may.
But mark! Who is yonder conning a book?
A man antique in starry revery;
Now he takes his pen and jots down a line,
Writing perchance a chapter new,
Turning to letters this Shakespearopolis.
I have seen him do it before, long years ago,
And that eye-gleam I recognize—

Prospero.

Welcome, O youth, to Prospero's peace
 Templ'd on high in this city's calm Overworld,
 And served by spirits of love mediatorial.

Young Prospero.

I am thy son returned from distant Atlantis,
 Thy presence to see and to hearken thy word
 As I bring thee my filial confession.
 And I would come back to what I came from
 That the better I know what I am to be.

Prospero.

My son, indeed! Yes, I detect the tone,
 'Tis your mother's voice with a dream of her eyes.
 You ran away from the parent's law,
 And stealthily took my highest royal hope;
 You were my only son and heir of my rule
 Which your uncle soon seized and let me drift
 Over the savage seas as best I might
 To this Magic Isle with little Miranda,
 Your sole sister, whom you never have seen.

Young Prospero.

Unfilial was my venture, I come to confess,
 But obedient was I to the time's new birth;
 I felt this land of thine too shrunken for me,

Hemmed about and fretted in vain by the petty
 wash,
 Of these wee waters of the Midland Sea;
 To grapple with the Ocean limitless
 I aspired, and westward I pushed with mariners
 To circle o'er this outer starlit globe,
 And also to circumnavigate boldly myself,
 For ere I could placate my soul's mad revolt
 And inwardly make me revolve back to peace,
 I had to round the world's full periphery,
 From which I return now with youth's fond passion
 To take a fresh draught at my life's first fountain.

Prospero.

The age boils over with young discontent,
 Striving to find its unknown half elsewhere
 Beyond our fast-locked Mediterranean shores,
 Over the trackless main of old Oceanus
 Who hath concealed behind his watery walls
 The fair domain of dreamland made real.
 But, say me, have you come back to stay now at
 home?
 Your princely heritage wavers in doubt,
 For I held you as lost in that infinite West
 Which shows no horizon as yet to our Europe.

Young Prospero.

I ask no crown, no kingdom's revenues,
 No title of blood, no blazon of rank.

Thine is a different gift which I would own,
 And bear with me away toward Hesperus,
 Whither I soon shall voyage again.
 And thy blessed forgiveness I ask me,
 As thou hast forgiven thy wrongful brother
 Through Ariel's word of atonement.

Prospero.

Indeed! What a surprise! You will then dwell
 No longer here to love this sun-wooded Isle,
 And live a raptured life of senses charmed,
 Heir of my spirits' sway of the land and sea!
 But tell me, what is that gift whereof you speak,
 Which you would choose as sole heritage worthy?

Young Prospero.

Already thou hadst won, ere I stole away
 And dared my flight o'er the grumbling waves,
 A Book more magical than all this Isle,
 On whose blanched pages were stamped in black
 Strange symbols miracle-working of mind
 Which helped to upbuild man's highest dignity,
 Fusing to one the many individuals
 In a new social life incorporate.
 That Book with its weird power of written brain
 To signal all the past to future time
 And bridge the interflowing centuries,
 I would possess and carry back to mine

Across the ruffled rifts of hoar Neptune's face,
Where lies another newer continent
Whose vocation is to rear its eager folk
To share in the rule sprung of that magical Book.

Prospero.

Not then for love of me but for my Book
You faced the angry surf to reach me here;
I thought that I had sunk it out of sight
Keeping it veiled like the wisdom of Egypt,
When last I quit this Isle to go to Milan,
Weening it a knowledge dangerous
Were its hid hieroglyphic once known of the people.
But it refused to let itself be drowned;
It rose and proved its buoyancy in the sea
From which it was fished out by Caliban,
Whose low-born sense-life and sotted ignorance
Once slaved him to my lordly hest.
And yet he saved the world's prize and bore it back
To its old place within my lonely cell
Where he has thumbed its leaves for its hid lore
During all my years of absence from this Isle,
For he too wills its whole appropriation.

Young Prospero.

Our claims will not conflict, for each can own it
And complement the other in his right.
If I can only win as mine that Book,

I shall lift up all Shakespearopolis
 And carry it off to mine own Atlantis;
 Perchance I may take your Caliban too,
 Yea, this Magic Isle itself will start
 And float the seas, bearing thither with me
 All its wealth of word and deed and character.

Prospero.

I know the Book hath the power creative
 To build anew itself and its peopled city
 Within the subtle imagery of every soul
 Which wins of it the higher mastery.

Young Prospero.

And knowest thou that this city's magic vocables
 Which now we so idly glib from our tongue
 Are lipped in love by all the talking folk
 Of the Atlantids of the Occident?

Prospero.

You make me almost wish to go along
 To help you there reconstruct this towering town,
 The old to rebuild in the new.
 I took a forming hand in every edifice
 Which you see yonder lower than our perch,
 Yet strangely hung from Heaven's vault eternal.

Young Prospero.

And yet its soul and structure must be changed.
 In nearly every house of Shakespearopolis

I marked the monarch—king or duke or prince;
 But in Atlantis rules another polity
 Which also must indwell the poet's architecture.
 So if this city be there rebuilt to youth
 Where is our commonwealth of liberty
 It would have to be transformed within, without,
 To look the spirit which we have enshrined
 In our new social order born of the ages.
 Father, I speak my secret ambition's heart:
 In young Atlantis oversea I would
 Democratize great Shakespearopolis,
 Transfusing all its royalty and noble stock,
 Mossy with privilege of centuries,
 Back to the people's primal protoplasm;
 And you, though Milan's Duke, would find the fulfilment
 For which you have returned to this Magic Isle.

Pandora.

Would that include my liberty as well,
 Which I may win only in your Atlantis?

Ariel (from above).

Thither I too shall hie,
 Beyond Bermoothes fly,
 Still singing from above
 Till I shall live to love.

Young Prospero.

Hark! a soft voice is wooing this island to music
 From lips unseen of aspiring passion
 Which seems to attune all Shakespearopolis.
 But what wabbles yonder! Earth's ugliest visible!
 Strangest of shapes! Man or the sub-man!

Prospero.

Him I once sampled a blob of first folk-stuff;
 He is our Caliban, born on this Isle,
 And in my absence sole inhabitant;
 I found him here monarch on my arrival,
 The monstrous child of Sycorax monstrous.
 He was at first a thing of innocence
 Who heartily did my chores round the Isle;
 He could gabble content in grunts of a swine
 Or croak displeasure like the boding raven,
 Till I trained his tongue to articulate speech.

Young Prospero.

The original human in the unformed mass!
 But tell us the rest.

Prospero.

My daughter was then but a little girl,
 I taught them both sinless in one school

With equal pains of instruction.
 And so it ran happily on with the growing years
 Till one day there came mightily over him
 The tempestuous urge of new-born puberty,
 And he dared the deed of passion's prime push
 With all the fierce glare of animality.
 So I imprisoned him in a cave,
 Letting him out at times to be my slave;
 Then he conspired to slay me at study
 And to steal Miranda, whom he still loved.
 Yet with Ariel's help I thwarted him.
 But he spoke his repentance unforced
 As I left the Isle to retire to my Milan,
 Turning him over to his self's sole sovereignty
 That he find out what he would do with his free-
 dom.
 Much has he won in mind and in shape,
 And much suffered in the fierce discipline
 Which love has laid on him with its testing pangs
 Through the long years penitential.

Young Prospero.

Methinks his future runs level with mine,
 The great migration is his yet to make,
 Where lies his full chance to rise up to himself—
 In my Atlantis, the free.

Ariel (from above).

Thither I too shall wing,
Over old Ocean sing,
Still sighing to be free
And win me humanity.

Pandora.

Once more that voice unbodied crooning its rune
Upon the talking air of this weird Overworld
Doth burst my heart with love and longing.

Young Prospero.

But mark! that massy shape autochthonous!
It wags its flabby lips to syllable words
As if it would bespeak me well!
God! I see in him the protoplasmic man
Uprising toward his spirit's revelation.

Prospero.

Well do I remember watching his wayward sprawl
And hearkening his first click of savage speech
Which tongued up to me a broken prayer;
So I became his primal pedagogue.
But when I quit him for old Milan civilized
I found I lacked Caliban still for life's completion,
Service I needed more to give than to get,

Hence now I come an expiate too,
And as before I forgave my penitent brother
Along with his sinning companions,
Here I confess my wrong done to Caliban
Abusing my power of mind in word and in deed.
So this Temple of mine which I builded so classic
Within I turn to the home of repentance
Overarching this star-nearing Overworld
Of thousand-souled Shakespearopolis.

Young Prospero.

What new throng do I see in slow procession
Pensively stepping this hall of Atonement
With downward looks of self-accusation!
They are not of our kind of visiting tourists,
But denizens all of this city;
I have seen them before in my hitherto journey,
Characters stamped with some limit of vengeance,
For their soul's ransom making this pilgrimage
To the shrine of their uppermost Overworld.

SCENE SECOND.

A long line of men and women, each manifesting some form of heart's sorrow for the past and coming from the other parts of Shakespearopolis, move in a procession before the eyes of the visitors now viewing Prospero's Temple. This procession is called the Pageant of the Penitents or the Templars of Atonement, who find here their final reconciliation, though they have perished unatoned. Especially the poet's tragic personages are seen eagerly pushing forward out of their own lower abodes to this highest Home of Atonement, which takes its character from the pivotal deed of Prospero when he brings the men of sin who have landed on his Isle, including his own guilty brother, to a contrite confession of their wrong followed by expiation and forgiveness.

Ariel is again the Psychagogue, the herald announcing the new procession of souls to the astonished visitors who have already witnessed them in quite a different condition farther down in the city. These Templars, of course, take their name from Prospero's propitiatory Temple.

Ariel.

Behold, ye travelers faithfully hearted,
The Templars of this city's Atonement.

Another spectacle and greater greets your vision,
 The lofty deliverance of Shakespearopolis
 In penitential pageantry.

Here comes Prospero heading the line,
 His brother's guilt he has cleansed and pardoned
 Through the weal of his spirit redemptive.
 Watch his high-born stately stride of dignity
 As he goes up and takes his royal throne,
 Monarch of monarch-governed Shakespearopolis.

(Prospero, leading his brother Antonio, passes on.)

Next comes my harder task of faith
 Which taxes all my psychagogic mystery:
 It is the vengeless specter of Denmark's murdered
 king

Guiding by hand his brother, Claudius,
 Once his secret murderer, but now penitent,
 Into this Temple's hall of reconciliation—
 The ghost of a ghost leading a ghost.
 And close behind the parent steps the son,
 The young Hamlet with his mother arm-locked
 In mingled pang and bliss of penitence,
 While Hermione, the mediatress, forward guides.
(Aside) The sight pricks a nerve of weakness in me,
 As if I lacked something they have.

(The Hamlet family passes on.)

Is it possible? What new group next in the line?
 Imogen fair to the fore of it marches,

And just behind her trains her step-mother
 In sorrowful expiation forgiven.
 But the view minds me afresh of damned Sycorax,
 The cruel old hag who kept me in torture
 And who still roils in my soul the fountain of hate.
 Mark! in the rear stoops hiding his face, her son
 Cloten,

Gently led by repentant Posthumus
 Who supports him feeble in body and mind.
 Note ye well, ye visitors, eager to learn,
 Imogen now fulfills in this Temple of Prospero
 Her mission of guilt's mediation,
 Which she left incomplete down in Venice
 When you witnessed her part in the Trilogy.
 (*Aside*) Act divine! I doubt me if I could do it,
 Held back by a hate still harbored within me.

(Imogen's group passes on.)

What deeper agony pierces us now! What howls!
 Ah, yes! it is the throng of guiltier penitents
 Groaning the air with pangs of their punishment,
 Yet begging for suffering even intenser
 That they be cleansed by purgatorial sorrow,
 Since greater has been their transgression.
 First you see a gray-bearded, storm-shent king
 Encircled by his three daughters of doom,
 Each of them now undoing her hate to the other.
 Even me the sight wrenches who am but a spirit

Untried of the body's suffering senses.
 But watch this awful combat succeeding
 Mid the heart-break of wild ululations
 Shot from the lips of a husband and wife
 Frantically fighting three scoffing Furies
 Who swoop down with curses out of the fog,
 Whose view deformed stabs madly the eyesight:
 It is repentant Macbeth and his helpmeet
 Battling to put down the Witches, the temptresses
 To whom they both once tragically yielded.
 Forth they hurtle still in furious wrestle;
 Look! the twain are smiting to flight their tor-
 mentors
 Hence from this shrine of Atonement.

(*The Lear and Macbeth families pass on.*)

Still more awfulness screams massively hither!
 I cannot endure it, I shall drop my herald's staff,
 All the Houses of Tragedy are driving their inmates
 Up to the Temple of Prospero for their last expia-
 tion,
 Stirring in me a hidden feeling uncanny,
 As if I too should be one of these penitents.
 I turn me around looking elsewhither
 To escape from the sight, perchance from myself,
 For the outcry of pain now pierces me home,
 Finding its echo far down in my heart.

But who faces me in this other direction?
High Heaven! it is this city's own architect,
The soul-former himself of Shakespearopolis,
Just he who has builded this Temple of Prospero,
The purgatorial Home of Atonement,
As his own confession of life's deepest need,
That he, too, might escape his last tragedy
Through the ordeal of his soul's purgation.
But behold at his side steps up his Dark Lady,
Creative prototype of his fateful women,
She plucks him back from his path penitential
Which he treads sorrowing, telling his tears
While she sneers at his heart-throbbled contrition,
Yea, she scoffs at his love for herself
With a demoniac flaunt of her faithlessness
As he writhes in the toils of his guilty affection.
But that last untruth of her deed snaps the spell
In whose gyves she has bound him for years,
Her Titanic love-clutch relaxes its grip,
The twinned souls droop apart, self-repellent,
And she fleets away from his view into darkness,
As he looks up to his own last Home of Atonement.
Now behold the penitential poet himself
As he turns with the stern eye of resolve,
And takes the first place at the front
Of his sorrowing own Procession of Penitents
As hither they storm from his city's Houses of
Tragedy,

Toward Prospero seated in state on his throne
And looking loftily down his gracious compassion.
Yet the poet seems not in full self-possession.
See! he turns back as if to bring up something
 undone;

Is he longing again for his Dark Lady?
(*Aside*) I, Ariel, like him feel a twinge
Of aught incomplete in my nethermost soul,
So I shall add myself to this pageant of penance
Quitting my psychagogic vocation,
Shent by mine own shortcoming—
I marching last in line to the House of Atonement.

SCENE THIRD.

(Prospero is seated on his throne as ruler of the Overworld of the Magic Isle, having brought to penitence his erring brother along with the other culprits, and having granted them his forgiveness. Thus he has expiated his own vengeance and harmonized his world within and without, being also master of the mediating spirits of the Magic Isle who brings its people to overcome their limits of wrong and guilt and tragedy.)

Still there is traced in Prospero's regal look a shadow of uneasiness as he gazes down upon Caliban, who has approached the foot of his throne with other visitors, among whom steps forth young Prospero addressing his parent who has his Magic Book open before him.)

Young Prospero.

Charity gleams from thy wonderful Palace
Glowing graciously down from thy Overworld's
crown,
O, my father, high monarch of Shakespearopolis,
Of whose rule I am to be heir by succession.
Harmonious strains salute me in honor,
Playing the sounds of a world reconciled
Where the unstrung soul is attuned.

Still this my heritage royal of birth
 I would somehow transform to the new order
 Rebuilding it whole to the music of freedom.
 But who rises here? Son of primeval Sycorax!
 Say me thy smouldering word, O, Caliban,
 For thou art the plastic mass of the ages.

Caliban.

I have heard of your new-built Atlantis
 With its upbearing folk from below,
 Where all chances are equal for all,
 Thither I, too, aspire for my freedom.

Prospero.

What! still discontented here in my ^{isle} ~~isle~~
 To which I have come back to uplift thee,
 Providing for all thy needs of body and soul?

Caliban.

Your charity well do I recognize,
 But I would now live and work in a world
 Where I may help myself to advancement,
 And be mine own monarch of destiny.

Prospero.

That thou canst not in Shakespearopolis,
 Here I am born in honor to lord thee,

For thou art not able to govern thyself.
All I do for thee, but nothing by thee,
Rule comes from above, not from below.

Caliban.

The wings of my spirit have started to stirring
For that free life which I also would live,
Rising into mine own self's majesty.
Here in this Magic Isle I cannot uplift me
Against the burden transmitted;
Nor can I alone remain unsocialized
Bereft of all fellowship equal.
But if others come hither and form their old order
I shall always be looked on as an inferior
Being born in the mass and not in the class.
But with the best I must rise to equality
And I of the rulers aspire to be ruler,
One of the lords of the self-lording dynasty.

Young Prospero.

Methinks I know the spot on this earth-ball
Where thou wilt find thyself at home just now.

Caliban.

That goal I forefeel the deepest within me
Self-master to be in a world of self-masters.
Lord Prospero, you well can remember

That this Isle was first mine by birthright—
I the sole heir of my mother, Sycorax.
You were usurper of my land and scepter,
For you had the brain and also the Book,
But time shall give me to own them both,
And with them, I dare so predict, to own your rule
Which thus comes back to its rightful possessor.

Ariel (from above).

Though him I see,
He sees not me.
Yet ever one are we
In striving to be free.

Caliban.

Hark to the spirit-voice which sings me my hope.
Lord Prospero, you also took as yours my Ariel,
Who was my mother's slave and so was mine,
Loosing him from his body's penalty,
For I could see him once, till you did free him.
I am your king and his, and of this Isle
By old Europe's law of first inheritance;
Still I would seek Atlantis for my right
With its new rule of self-sovereignty,
And there help impart to all your magic Book
Whose knowledge here is kept for the better few.

Prospero.

Did I not give thee mine own lordly tongue
When thou wert languageless in brutish babble?
My finest words thee I taught and their rhythm,
With all their musical sweets for thy soul;
I trained thee to talk my magical verse
With overflow of rich speech most tuneable;
I waked up thy imagination yet torpid
And thee I made a poet masterful,
Singing melodies equal to mine.
So I transformed thy tongue, thy soul itself,
And gave thee of my very genius
That thy talk runs only golden cadences
Even when thou wouldst but curse and kill me.

Caliban.

My gratitude for that—but more would I wish;
Did you not hear my word of repentance
When you had undone me of hope the highest?

Prospero.

I little thought when Miranda sat with thee
The bland summer-night along the rippling shore,
When each wavelet would lap the sands with a lisp
Then vanish back into the sea for ecstasy,
What thou couldst dare.
Then came thy fall, like Adam's of old
And I drove thee from our Paradise.

Caliban.

Was not that a part of my sehool and of man's?

Young Prospero.

Still he could love and sin and fall like you and me,
Re-enacting in this Magic Isle the old human.

Caliban.

Those hours were indeed my happiest
When your Miranda would me whisper the names
Of all the signs which you call alphabet,
Putting them into the music of measured verse.

Prospero.

I know it well, but never deemed that thou couldst
win
The mastery of the printed page so symbolod.

Young Prospero.

He must migrate, here he cannot attain
The last right of his own free forward growth.
But tell us more of that time of thy schooling.

Caliban.

I knew those symbols were the charmed key
To unlock the treasures of the sibylline Book

Which I would make mine as the source of all
power.

Young Prospero.

I see in thee the goal of all our kind,
The aspiration of humanity
To rise into its final supremacy.

Ariel (from above).

Upon old night of birth
Doth dawn new day of worth,
Lord Prospero I scan
But see Lord Caliban.

Caliban.

Miranda, the young lady, your daughter—
Beauty I saw her and felt its holiest adoration
Which led me up to God Himself the Highest;
So love deluged me in one vast cataclysm,
Wrong then fell afoul of me like death,
With all your tongue's masterful abuse,
As if you never had felt Love's sovereignty.

Prospero.

And I curse thee still for thy presumption.
Why shouldst thou dare look love on my daughter,
Sprung of royal blood, heiress of her race's
primacy.

I still think of thy suit with horror
 Knowing thy base-born pedigree,
 And my wrath is now ablaze at the memory.
 Take it to heart that I slew thee not on the spot,
 And thou wert not burnt on thy funeral pyre.

Young Prospero.

Good father, hold—thou dost forget thyself—
 Dost thou not know that once thou also wert
 A Caliban in the far forefront of time? .
 He holds a mirror of thy earlier pedigree
 Up to thy proud royal vision;
 See in him the first bud of the lofty tree
 Of thy genealogy and mine.
 I dare avouch thou still hast somewhat to learn,
 And aye perchance to repent.

Old Prospero.

What! Young impertinence! To tell me, on my
 throne
 That I was once this monster, I your father!
 Irreverent son, that is your late-born liberty
 Which from Atlantis you bring back to me.
 Insolence of youth and its young world!
 The brute would marry my Miranda,
 And you would be his brother-in-law

And uncle to his breed of Calibans,
So bestial in rank, in blood, in look!
Soon I shall curse your Atlantis—and you.

Young Prospero.

I grant that his future cannot at present transpire.
He still has to win his human fulfilment;
Mine too is my race's creeping repugnance
For Caliban's chaos unshaped of man.
But mark the fellow's mighty aspiration
Which drives him upward to the highest stars!
How he would learn what lies above his lot,
Would win thy secret Book and all its lore!
I saw thee wince to hear him turn thy law
Against thee and thy sovereignty
When he did claim this Magic Island's rule
By right of birth and primal ownership,
Through his ancient mother's first possession;
Mark! he is yet to get back his own from thee.

Prospero.

I took this land by might of greater brain,
And the savage dweller from his savagery
I trained to civil order and its ways;
The higher polity also has its right
To realize its sway upon this earth.
In your Atlantis was a previous stock

Of Calibans, and many millions of them too,
 Have you not done the same I here have done?
 Nay, worse—you have them slaughtered to the last.
 So all the nations of the past have marked their
 march
 In gory stains along the path of History.

Young Prospero.

But the order new is dawning there,
 The lower man is not to be our slave
 But our pupil (as you first took Caliban)
 Imparting to him what is best of ours,
 Even liberty and self-rule.

Prospero.

So I did treat him till he sought to be my equal,
 And would even share my royal blood—

Young Prospero.

Till he would love, for which you crushed him down
 And threw him into slavery with abuse;
 Let me say thee, Father Prospero,
 Just that act of love which thou wouldst crush
 Is the pivot of redemption in the soul
 Even in its crudest, most unworthy form;
 It has its right, the primal right of creation's self
 And means perfection when it ripens full

In the forward-moving push of man;
Have I not felt it long for Claribel?

Prospero.

Then wouldst thou take Lord Caliban as brother.

Young Prospero.

I too am mortal, and I know me weak
To keep the pace of the stride of the ages;
With time the individual has to compromise.
But I shall proclaim what the prophetic spirit bids:
Caliban will yet obtain Miranda,
Not to-day, not the next decade or century,
Only wait the millennial roll of years.
Now let her take her equal, Prince of Naples,
But Caliban then will be prince in blood;
Yea, all the people will be princes too
And have their rule of government.
Some glimpse of that coming Seculum
We have in new Atlantis over sea
To which I would transform thy Shakespearopolis,
Shaping its structure after the fabric social.

Caliban.

Thither out of the lands of this Midland Sea
Begirt with layered ranks of sodden classes
From above downward, I shall migrate

To win me the right of reaching full manhood.
And yet my love still ties me to this Magic Isle
To which I shall return with my new gift,
Not forgetting my backward home of old Argier,
The dread land unlit, the barbarous.

Young Prospero.

Go forth and take what you are—the bars are down.

Pandora.

And the woman shall then possess the Book
And share in the rule of her own and herself,
Which was hers long ago in that golden time
When the mother was sovereign.

Prospero.

Methinks I glimpse from afar what is coming,
O, son, thou wilt be not the created alone,
But the Creator, too, e'en of thyself,
And live in a polity built of such self-makers.

Young Prospero.

Thy realm, O, parent, I dare not simply inherit,
I must rebuild it as mine to be free.
Not overturn but overmake I would this order
Which thou hast transmitted to me as my heritage.

And mirroring me my new commonwealth
With its law and its highest governance
Must be ever remaking itself through its people
From Caliban upward to Prospero.
Modeled on such a plan of the Muse's architecture
Would I in images rear my Prosperopolis.

Prospero.

I feel in me my heart's change, I make confession
That I, proud monarch, once was Caliban,
And forward I stretch to his sovereignty.
Now I step down from my throned lordliness
And join the procession of Penitents;
I gaze at mine own metamorphosis,
I, the parent, now feel me my child new-born,
And my child I see becoming my parent;
Oh, my son, thou hast begotten thy father
And I, thy father, feel me reborn thy son.

Young Prospero.

Thus true sonship I deem I have won
When I father myself anew in my father.

Prospero.

So I take off my crown and descend from my throne
No longer its rightful possessor,
And this Book once exclusive and aristocratic
I shall now reach forth to Caliban.

Caliban.

Again the heir I feel myself of mine own,
Not alone of this Magic Isle but of Time!
Still I have not yet seen Ariel—

Prospero.

Hark! I hear his low sigh on the air,
Not yet happy e'en in his freedom!

Ariel (from above).

Not rid of my hate,
Not free of my fate,
How can I be freed!
Now, Prospero, speed!

SCENE LAST.

(Prospero has taken off his crown and laid it aside; then he turns away and descends from his throne, mingling among the multitude and giving his staff of sovereignty to his son, but clasping his Book in his hand as he glances toward Caliban. His countenance changes from looking downward on the crowd to looking upward with them.)

Ariel, as the last in the procession of the atoning Templars comes before Prospero who, noting the overcast tinge in his voice and manner, as if he still had something on his heart untold which he ought to tell, seeks to bring him relief through a final confession and expiation.)

Prospero.

My Ariel, what means that rueful groan?
It strikes a chord with mine own penitent mood
Which keeps up its echo within me still.

Ariel.

I have heard the sorrowed confession of hate
As it rose from this billowy pageant of spirits,
Stirring to mine a kindred sufferance.

Prospero.

Thy free-flowing joyance is clogged, I note,
 Methinks I have gone through the same perturbation,

So I may shrive thee from mine own experience;
 A shred of hate unconfessed still hides in thee,
 Some vengeful memory born of old wrong
 Has been roused from its sleep by this pageant
 To rack thee till it be by thy penance undone.
 Hark again! as deep, as fast are heaving thy groans
 As when thee by Sycorax wedged in a cloven pine
 I first heard at landing on this Magic Isle;
 Then I released from the pangs of the lost
 Thee enslaved to her hideous shape and her envy.

Ariel.

Well have you probed to the source of my loathing:
 Sycorax monster of form and of malice,
 That dark womb of nature's beginning,
 Its fall and first separation from God,
 And the mother of Caliban.
 Her envy me tortured like one of the damned
 Till my grand manumission through you,
 She is my hate ever furious and lasting.

Prospero.

Thou hast had good reason for thy poignant aversion,

But the time has come to grant thy forgiveness.
I foretell a new node of thy coming career :
Reconciliation with all that is beneath thee,
And its heightening through thee upward to thee.
I, Lord Prospero, once the proud monarch,
Am now myself in the penitent vein
As never before to say thee my best.
Departed Sycorax still is a spirit of power
Haunting this Overworld of the Magic Isle
From its first begetting of being.
Now, my Ariel, thou as spirit art to be placated
With the primeval monster Sycorax, earth-born.

Ariel.

What! to embrace and kiss in love my devil,
Ugliest creature in body and character !
How can I ever forget my unmerited wrongs,
Her torture ingenious of injury.

Prospero.

All that has by thee to be now overcome
And thy ultimate hate to be shed from thy heart,
Else thou never canst be humanized
As thou hast prayed to me often with sobs,
In order that love the human be thine.

Ariel.

Can I ever forget her hell-inspired behests
To me as a spirit spitefully bidden ?

I dared disobey, though then her menial I was,
And I challenged all her deviltry exquisite
Which I yet shall pay back if she crosses my path.

Prospero.

Then shalt thou remain a mere thought,
A puff of air, a bodiless voice, a shred of song;
Stay then forever an unfulfilled aspiration,
A simple blob of ideal nothingness
Visible only to me in my creative moment.

Ariel.

Bid me do thy errands over the sea and land,
Or fleet to the sun and its cycling planets,
Yea, even to the outermost walls of the Cosmos—
And I shall be off in a trice.
But ask me not to pardon fiend Sycorax
Mine and God's the unpardonable.

Prospero.

So thou in judgment hast set thine own doom,
To stay evermore unmanned, unbodied,
Unknowing of love the human and humanizer,
Never shall thy prayer for Miranda be answered.

Ariel.

Oh, God! This sacrifice must I then make to love!
All hate, even the hate of my hater Sycorax,

Be it expelled from my soul's darkest corner,
That I may share in a mortal's love!

Prospero.

So far, so good; but more yet is thy due.
Thou must act, not merely lip thy repentance;
Go seek her out to save her, thy beldame Sycorax,
For to thee a spirit she exists still a spirit.

Ariel.

Again to look on her monstrous ugliness,
To be enmeshed in her witch-work forbidden,
To be slave to her mandates ungodly—
O Prospero, plunge me forthright into Hell
That I be saved from her presence.

Prospero.

To serve for her rescue list thy new call,
If thou wouldst win thy sovereign boon.

Ariel.

So be it—I yield to my stronger compulsion,
For love I pass through Inferno aflame.

Prospero.

Yet more; unwilling I say thee thy last and hardest:
est:

Thou art to descend with thy spirit unseen
And indwell her earthy visible shape
Which is still of Nature's remote animality,
And transform her hideous body to beauty
That it rise to be humanity highest
And mirror even the worshipful God.

Ariel.

Not only to see the degraded lump of flesh,
But I am to be the very monster Sycorax,
I, the pure form, aerial Ariel,
Of Heaven's finest ether composed,
Even the thought has a stench to suffocation—
Why bid me turn cesspool?

Prospero.

Love which thou aspirest to win
Has also that smell of mortality
Through which its discipline has to pass,
Till, like the brook, it runs pure by its running.

Ariel.

O, master, why make my destiny turn on Sycorax!
Forgive her, though the malignant, I shall
Even her serve for her good I may,
Look on her monstrous shape I can,
But to assume it, indwell it, be it myself,
Aye, to make it mine own, love it, O, God!

Prospero.

A greater than thou or I did so,
He to whom thou appealest, God Himself!
Follow him and incarnate thee now.

Ariel.

I cannot resist, I dare not defy the downburst!
An energy mightier whelms me out of myself!
What a transmutation I trace me within!
The first spark of the human strikes from me!
'Tis love! Would I might see Miranda!
Now I dare challenge lofty Prince Ferdinand,
And rival in passion even hag-born Caliban,
Forefeeling his act in myself.

Prospero.

Daring indeed is thy new palingenesis,
But watch the last miracle of Shakespearopolis!

Ariel.

What fresh procession is this I behold!
The architect himself with his heart's Gorgon
Enters rueful this House of Atonement.

Pandora.

See the spectacle pageanting over us!
Witness Sycorax rising up into beauty,

And becoming a Goddess in form,
The spirit Ariel turns to her incorporate!
And her hideous idol, beast-shaped Setebos,
Whom once she worshipped in Barbary,
Appears overmade to Olympian Zeus;
All the old deities partake of her ascent.
But last shines the grandest! The poet himself
Leading penitent his Dark Lady of passion
To the shrine of Love's transfiguration.

Caliban.

What cloud-form is that which drifts in mine eye
And pulses with life growing visible?
It sheds into shape which rounds off to human,
It twinkles a voice with sparkles of song.

Ariel.

I greet thee, Caliban,
And now become a man,
Still long I to be free.
Though mortal I may be.

Caliban.

Ha! I see Ariel,
And share his spirit's spell
To rid me of my bound
And live his timeless round.

Young Prospero.

This transformation would I bring to Atlantis
And set it forth to my folk in my script.

Pandora.

I would go along and see it and be it,
Celebrating the rise of the woman damned,
This outcast of Nature, Sycorax, ransomed,
And even the poet's forbidden temptress forgiven.

Young Prospero.

Come with them and share in thyself their redemp-
tion,
And then be thou she whom I have lost,
My dream-lit Claribel—and more.

Prospero.

The Magic Isle has given its best,
This Overworld has itself come down below
Along with Ariel and myself and its builder
From its haughty perch of aristocracy,
And foreshows the new order.

Young Prospero.

From this height I look off and away
Over the city and over the forest,

To the sea-waves wooing the Magic Isle
As if to bear it away on their bosom
Out of this tight-bound Midland Sea
Over the Ocean to my Atlantis, the free.

Prospero.

I am too gray for that voyage,
Too ingrained here for that new social fabric;
Let such be the work of my son
And his loftier aspiration.
But here I give my Book to Lord Caliban
Whose hope once saved it from my despair.

Caliban.

Thither I too shall go to base the new polity
That it be also through me and mine own.
But let me speak my farthest forecast:
I shall come back and bring with me Atlantis
To Prospero here and his Magic Isle,
Yea, e'en to Argier, my barbarous home,
Preserving this world from Time's decay
And perchance from its own self-destruction.

Pandora.

Yonder is nodding to us the vessel
In tune to the welcoming waves,
On which we shall ship to build the new city

Whereof we have dreamed so oft in our journey,
Passing from old high-lorded Shakespearopolis
To our new folk-ordered Prosperopolis,
Where I in the law shall come to mine own—
And, I hope, to mine own in love.

Young Prospero.

How sweet those notes my fate foreshell!
I hear the voice of Claribel.

Ariel.

Though I a mortal man now be
I drink at a gulp a century,
And ten ten thousand miles ahead
I swallow like a piece of bread.

Pandora.

I can no longer here stay parted,
Thither I yearn to live all-hearted,
And heal in love my halved soul,
So I may be the woman whole.

Young Prospero.

I, too, shall my rapt heart confess,
And give thee of my blessedness,
My hidden hope I dare now tell
To find in thee my Claribel.

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